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ABSTRACT

This U.S. history curriculum guide is divided into five main components. The first component is titled "Essays in American History," and is accompanied by a bibliographic essay. The guide represents the "crossroads" model of curriculum development that begins with three strategic junctures of history education: (1) at grades 7 and 8, where a natural "crossroads" already exists between elementary and secondary education, between childhood and adolescence, and between an interest in the concrete and a capacity to grapple with the abstract; (2) in the first year of postsecondary education, where students are taking surveys of U.S. history, government, and education that can provide a critical juncture between secondary and postsecondary education; and (3) in capstone experiences of postsecondary education, notably social studies methods and student teaching. Essays in Part One-I examine the substantive themes of continuity and change that knit together the 12 chronological periods of U.S. history. Following an introduction, the essays are: (1) "A World of Their Own: The Americas to 1500"; (2) "Contact: Europe and America Meet, 1492-1620"; (3) "The Founding of New Societies, 1607-1763"; (4) "What Was the American Revolution? 1760-1836"; (5) "The Ambiguous Democracy, 1800-1848"; (6) "'Now We Are Engaged in a Great Civil War,' 1848-1880"; (7) "'What, Then, Is This American?' 1865-1900"; (8) "Waves of Reform, 1880-1921"; (9) "Boom and Bust, 1921-1933"; (10) "The Age of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945"; (11) "Leader of the Free World, 1945-1975"; and (12) "A Nation in Quandary, 1975-." (BT)

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CROSSROADS

A K-16 American History Curriculum

ESSAYS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

by Richard B. Bernstein

A joint project of the Niskayuna School District and The Sage Colleges

Made possible with the assistance of the
Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST) of the
United States Department of Education

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Preface

In 1992, The Sage Colleges (Troy, NY) and the Niskayuna School District (Niskayuna, NY) received a three-year grant from the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST) of the U.S. Department of Education to develop a seamless K-16 curriculum in American history. The curriculum, called *Crossroads,* is composed of thirty-six units equally distributed among elementary, middle, and high school grade levels, as well as course syllabii for preservice social studies educators on the subjects of American history and history education. The curriculum is chronologically organized into twelve historical periods--each covered by a unit at each of the three grade levels.

Each unit begins with an essay on the history and historiography of the period written by the project historian, Richard B. Bernstein, an Associate of the Council for Citizenship Education at The Sage Colleges and an adjunct faculty member at New York Law School and distinguished historian. The unit plans were then written by teams of Niskayuna and Sage teachers after a year-long seminar in American history and historiography with Professor Bernstein. Following their preparation, elementary and middle school units were field tested within the Niskayuna District and in the Albany City School District. The middle school curriculum was also field tested in two Ohio districts. All units were reviewed by an advisory panel. The project is directed by Stephen L. Schechter, a Professor of Political Science and Director of the Council for Citizenship Education at The Sage Colleges, and by Henry E. Mueller, Niskayuna Middle School Social Studies Coordinator. The project is administered by the Council for Citizenship Education.

Developed by the Niskayuna-Sage partnership, the "crossroads" model of curriculum development begins with three strategic junctures of history education: (1) at grades seven and eight, where a natural "crossroads" already exists between elementary and secondary education, between childhood and adolescence, and between an interest in the concrete and a capacity to grapple with the abstract; (2) in the first year of postsecondary education, where students are taking surveys of American history, government, and education which can provide a critical juncture between secondary and postsecondary education; and (3) in capstone experiences of postsecondary education, notably social studies methods and student teaching, in which students experience another transition, this time between their undergraduate experience in postsecondary education and the prospect of a teaching career rich in lifelong learning experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Tell them that the old man says that writing any history is just pulling a tomcat by his tail across a Brussels carpet.

-- Charles A. Beard to Eric F. Goldman[1]

I. THE CHALLENGE

This Introduction -- like this whole project -- is an exercise in bridge-building. Most students encounter history, social studies, and government (as subjects for intellectual inquiry) for the last time in courses taught in elementary and secondary schools -- or, at best, at the undergraduate level. The teachers of those courses are the first, and often the last, historians those students will ever meet. These teachers are fighting on the front lines to give students both the basic information they need and the thinking skills they need to make sense of and to use that information. They lay the groundwork on which history, government, political science, and law professors will have to build.

We have devised the CROSSROADS Project to respond to this great challenge.

• The first assumption of the CROSSROADS Project is that we -- both front-line teachers and cloistered academics -- do labor in the same trenches. Our common challenges and responsibilities outweigh whatever differences in academic level may distinguish us from one another.

• The second assumption of the CROSSROADS Project is that we can join forces across the methodological and educational divides separating the various levels of the education system, for a variety of useful purposes: (1) to keep teaching in the schools up-to-date with the latest findings of academic specialists, (2) to keep academic specialists up-to-date with the requirements of classroom teachers and the expectations (right or wrong, accurate or distorted) of students, and (3) to lay sound foundations, at each stage of the educational process, for the next stage.

These assumptions animate the arguments presented in this introductory essay, the body of which is divided into two parts. The first part addresses those methodological themes and concepts that, we believe, are essential for students to grasp in order to develop an understanding of history and an ability to grapple with and master the substance of history. The second part examines the substantive themes that, we suggest, knit together the twelve periods into which we

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[1]Quoted in Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), xi.

have divided American history. Some of them remain constant in importance over time. Others ebb and flow in relative significance as we move from period to period; this part of this essay addresses how these themes wax and wane with reference to specific political, social, economic, or intellectual developments.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Themes

We have developed a set of four elements of historical thinking that students should carry with them, both as they proceed through the stages of their formal education and beyond:

1. *What do we mean when we talk about the past?* History deals with time. Sometimes the stories historians tell emphasize how things remain the same over time; sometimes historians emphasize how social and economic conditions, institutions of government, political ideas and practices, and literary and cultural life have changed over time. *Change* and *continuity* are the two vital features of historical time.

2. *What made the past happen the way that it did?* This question actually cloaks two vitally important concepts -- *contingency* and *causation*. When historians seek to explain why the past happened a certain way, and not in a range of other, equally possible ways, they recognize that the past need not have happened the way it did. Their term for this essential feature of history is *contingency*. When historians seek to identify the reasons why the past happened the way it did, they are exploring questions of *causation*.

3. *Why did people in history think, say, or do what they thought, said, or did?* The past often can be explained in terms of what individual men and women, or groups of men and women, thought, said, and did. When historians seek to understand why people in the past thought certain thoughts, said certain things, or did certain acts, they do so by exploring issues of *motivation* and *intention*. (Some historians use *intention* to mean what historical actors declare they want to do, and *motivation* to mean what historical actors REALLY want to do, but don't want to admit. This distinction seems too conspiratorial an explanation of the past to be useful.)

a. *Motivation* means "why they did what they did." For example, when the framers of the Constitution wrote that document, their *motivation* was to preserve the Union and the fruits of the American Revolution by establishing a government strong enough to protect national interests, yet checked and balanced so that it would not endanger the liberty of the people or the legitimate sovereignty of the states.

As noted above, some historians use motivation to mean *real* reasons as opposed to *expressed* or *ostensible* reasons. Although at times this distinction works well, we should use it with care, lest we treat every single historical actor as an unredeemable hypocrite. For example, Charles A. Beard argued that the framers of the Constitution really intended

to create a government that would protect their own property, unintentionally implying that they had no larger goals in mind. Generations of later historians have had fun beating Beard up on evidentiary and interpretative grounds, to such an extent that his original insight -- that historical actors often do things for a variety of reasons, some of them less noble or selfless than others -- got lost.

b. *Intention* means "what they thought they were doing, and what goals they sought to achieve." Thus, the *intentions* of the framers of the Constitution have to do with the way that they thought the proposed Constitution would function once it was adopted, and what kind of nation they hoped the Constitution would foster.

4. *How do we find out about the past?* The past is dead and thus beyond our reach, except for the residue it leaves in its wake. Thus, anyone who studies the past must sift through *documents*[2] -- expressive evidence about the past -- and *artifacts* -- evidence of the past that was not originally devised to convey information, but from which we can deduce information about the past.[3] Historians have developed ways of asking questions of documents and artifacts and using the answers they find to build explanations of what happened in the past and why. These issues subdivide into two groups:

a. issues of *evidence* (what kinds of things we can learn about the past from documents and artifacts), and

b. issues of *historical method* (what kinds of questions we can ask about the past, whether as a general matter or with respect to a specific piece of historical evidence).

B. Why Do Historical Methods Matter?

At this point, some may ask, "Why should our students care how historians do their work?" There is a wide range of answers to this question, but the most important is, "Students should learn how historians do their work because it is an excellent way to learn how to think critically about the past, and about uses of the past in present-day argument."

Historians' study of history has changed dramatically during the twentieth century. First, historians now emphasize the *differentness* of the past as a key part of the historical enterprise of recovering the past. Because the past is seen as fundamentally different from the present, it now

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[2]Examples of documents (we give the term the broadest possible construction) include constitutions, laws, treaties, court cases, newspapers, magazines, books, almanacs, diaries, private letters, baseball cards, campaign buttons, bureaucratic forms of all types, photographs, paintings, drawings, and sculptures.

[3]Examples of artifacts include most buildings, furniture, machines, clothing, kitchenware, toys, sports equipment, and weapons.

makes little sense to study history for the purpose of acquiring mechanical analogies with which to guide our activities in the present (e.g., "What would Lincoln do about health care?"). Second, and closely related to the first point, historians have turned away from the attempt to identify, articulate, and apply general laws of history or principles of historical development that hold true despite differences in time and place. Thus, the other old justification for studying history -- mastering the laws of history -- also has lost its relevance.

Given these changes in the ways that historians seek to understand the past, why, then, study history?

a. Carved above the entrance to the National Archives in Washington, D.C., is the admonition: "The Past is Prologue -- Study the Past." We are, in large part, the product of ideas, events, processes, and conditions that either are deeply rooted in the past or are modern responses to problems equally deeply rooted in the past. We cannot understand modern problems fully or usefully without understanding their sources and history. This is not history of the "What would Lincoln do about health care?" school -- rather, it is, "If we are to respond effectively to the health-care problem, we ought to understand how that problem came to be."

b. Our students will have to cope, as adults and as citizens, with arguments about the present that draw on the past -- whether those arguments cite the past as authority or dismiss it as irrelevant. The study of history is thus one of the best spheres of human inquiry for students to develop the skills of critical thinking -- about the structure, continuity, and consistency of argument; about the use or abuse of evidence; about the necessity of civility and mutual respect in legitimate argument; and about the ability to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate argument (both in substance and methodology).[4]

C. An "Anti-Philosophical" Philosophy of History

Some students of history demand an overarching philosophy of history which they hope to use as an intellectual framework to structure their knowledge of the past. Many of the great thinkers of human civilization -- for example, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold J. Toynbee -- have sought to articulate such philosophies. Most practicing historians have grave problems with this quest, because the search for an overarching framework tends to produce a tendency to shoehorn any and every historical fact into that framework, often bending the fact in question out of recognizable shape. As the great legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin once observed, "Historians make lousy philosophers, and philosophers make lousy historians."

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[4]For an excellent illustration, see the important new book by Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), and the review by Walter Reich in *The New York Times Book Review*, 11 July 1993.

Nonetheless, we can present a set of general statements that will give a sense of the nature of history. History is at least two different things -- the past and the study of the past. The following generalizations apply to both understandings of the term:

History is HUMAN. It is both the record of what human beings have thought, said, and done in the past and the accumulated body of work expressing what human beings think and have thought about history.

History is INCOMPLETE. We will never know everything about the past "as it happened," and no history has the last word about the past or any aspect of it.

History is CONTEMPORARY. Our present concerns have a lot to do with which aspects of the past survive in the modern historical memory, and with how we examine, describe, and interpret that past (including how we add to or prune out evidence of the past that survives in the modern historical memory).

History is CONTINGENT. It need not have happened the way it happened, and no historical interpretation is ever fore-ordained or predetermined.

History is UNCOOPERATIVE. The past does not easily yield its secrets (and sometimes does not yield anything at all), and historians' arguments and interpretations don't always answer *our* questions -- at least, not the way we want them to do.

History is PLURALIST. There is no single explanation for a historical event, and there is no single "correct" way to do history.

Put that all together and it spells HICCUP -- which is (1) the feeling that most practicing historians get when asked about their philosophy of history and (2) a useful mnemonic device for students.

One more point, the foundation for what has gone before: When historians "do" history, are they engaged in a quest for historical truth? The problem with this question is that it confuses two levels of historical understanding -- historical facts, which include such things as the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and historical explanations, which seek to provide answers to such questions as "Why did the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor?"

Historical facts are easier to view in terms of truth versus falsity than historical explanations -- e.g., it was the Japanese, not the Burmese, who attacked Pearl Harbor, and they did it on 7 December 1941, not 8 December 1941 or 7 December 1991.

Historical explanations are much harder to address in terms of their "truth." Is it true, for example, that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor because they felt that they were defending their interests against aggressive American foreign policy? This is at least one reason that modern

historians have assigned for the raid, but there are others. In essence, the problem is that no historical event happens for just one reason, and the historian's assignment of greater or lesser weight to certain reasons or causes is a matter of scholarly plausibility, not truth or falsity.

What historians do is to look at the past (or what we can glean or salvage of it), try to figure out what we can describe or explain, and do it as honestly and responsibly as we can, knowing that other historians will disagree and that we in turn may come to change our minds.

III. CHRONOLOGICAL STRUCTURE AND SUBSTANTIVE THEMES

In designing this curriculum, we have adopted a chronological structure for American history. Our decision is not, and should not be seen as, a requirement that students memorize dates for the mere sake of the rote exercise. Rather, chronology remains a valuable historical and pedagogical tool -- if we teach it *as* a tool for students to use to organize their historical knowledge.

• Students at the elementary level need not absorb the exactitudes of chronology -- but they should grasp that George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks, Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong, Abigail Adams and Nancy Reagan could not have met one another. They should know (and they may well grasp already) that their childhood is a different time from their parents' childhood, which in turn is different from their grandparents' childhood. They should know, for example, that American children before the 1940s did not have television, that American children before the 1900s did not have movies, and that most American children before 1900 did not have the automobile.

• Students at the middle-school level can master the details of historical chronology, once we explain what its uses are and how it can help them to master history. Again, they should not be forced to memorize lists of dates just for mnemonic exercise; rather, they should be trained to orient themselves in history first by reference to chronology. (A useful framework is the list of Presidential terms; although it tends to have the disadvantage of teaching students that history is measured by Presidencies, it has the advantage of being a relatively short and easily mastered body of data. If students can absorb, without outside compulsion and with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, lists of Oscar or Grammy or MTV awards, or lists of World Series or Super Bowl or NBA playoff winners, they can easily master the list of the Presidents.)

• Students at the secondary-school level, having (we hope) absorbed basic American historical chronology, can put it to work in mastering the methodological ideas listed above about what historians do and how they do what they do.

The following is the chronological framework that structures the twelve historical essays following this Introduction:

1. The Americas to 1500
2. Contact: Europe and America Meet, 1492-1620
3. The Founding of New Societies, 1607-1763
4. What Was the American Revolution?: 1760-1836
5. The Ambiguous Democracy in America, 1800-1848
6. "Now we are engaged in a great civil war": 1848-1880
7. "What, then, is this American?": 1865-1900
8. Waves of Reform, 1880-1921
9. Boom and Bust, 1921-1933
10. The Age of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945
11. "Leader of the Free World": 1945-1975
12. A Nation in Quandary, 1975--

We also have developed a set of eight "Topics of Continuity and Change" that students should carry with them, both as they proceed through the stages of their education and once they are adults. We have tried to identify themes that are essential to general historical inquiry and themes unique to American history:

A. Geography as the Setting of American History
B. The Evolution of American Political Democracy
C. The Evolution of American Political Ideas
D. The Evolution of American Society
E. The Question of a Distinctive American Culture
F. America as a Gathering of Peoples and Cultures
G. The Development of an American Economy
H. The Changing Role of America in the World

These themes evolve over time, of course; some are more important in certain periods, and less important in other periods. Moreover, they do not exist in isolation; they interact with one another, shape one another, and occasionally reinforce one another. The following paragraphs sketch how each substantive theme evolves over time, and how the eight themes interact and often interconnect in the twelve chronological segments:

A. Geography as the Setting of American History

As the poet Robert Frost put it, "This land was ours before we were the land's." American history, among other things, is the evolving story of how the American people interacted with the North American continent -- how American Indians sought to live in harmony with it, how European settlers and their American descendants sought to populate and tame it, and how the geographical facts of America shaped the Americans' understandings of themselves and their place in the world.

• First, the existence of a vast "new" continent suggested the inexhaustible richness of America -- in arable land, potable water, navigable rivers and streams, and organic (timber, animal furs) and mineral (gold, silver, iron, petroleum) wealth. This assumption that the riches of America were without practical limit drove the westward settlement of the continent (colonization, settlement, development, wars of territorial acquisition) and shaped the many ways in which Americans used or wasted those resources. As noted below, it was not until Americans began to realize that the vast natural resources of America were nonetheless limited that they also began to take seriously the obligation to care for the environment.

• Second, until the development of airplanes, rockets, and missiles, Americans believed that the continent was isolated from the great wars of Europe and Asia by two vast oceans. This sense of geographic insulation fostered Americans' sense of their own nation as a haven of liberty -- a view that, for most of our history, encouraged Americans to welcome immigration (though, as always, with varying views of the immigrants based on their race and ethnic origins). Geographic insulation also promoted a sense of geographic invulnerability, and thus furthered an American attitude towards world affairs that oscillated between cool indifference and arrogant preaching. Americans' arrogance especially manifested itself in the ways that the American nation dealt with its neighbors in North, Central, and South America, in particular after President James Monroe promulgated the Monroe Doctrine (1823), which warned European powers not to interfere in American concerns while providing a warrant (intended or not) for later *American* interference in the affairs of America's neighbors.

• Third, the sheer size of America dictated that there was, and could be, no comprehensive, all-embracing plan of settlement of the continent. The thirteen colonies were founded at different times, for different reasons, by different people, and the same pattern of diversity reasserts itself with respect to the founding, settling, and political development of the other thirty-seven states. Geography thus dictated that, throughout American history, American political development had to take account of a wide range of differing state and sectional interests, based on differing economies, ethnic origins, and cultural and religious values. Geography was thus a prime force behind the development of one of the key features of American politics -- federalism, the division of sovereignty (ultimate political power) among the federal government, the state governments, and the people.

• Fourth, Americans' belief in the seeming inexhaustibility of the nation's resources tended for many decades to prevent most Americans from paying attention to the effects they were having on the environment that they were taught to master. It was only in the 1900s that Americans began to ask tough questions about the effects of industrialization, urbanization and suburbanization, and the development of the automobile and the airplane on the natural world. Geography, broadly conceived as a theme of American history, thus embraces the rise of a conservation movement, and then an environmental movement, pitting a new model of human beings as stewards of the natural world against the traditional model of human beings as masters of the natural world. In addition, until the late 1960s, the dominant view that the American continent existed to be developed and exploited by human beings warped white Americans'

views of American Indians, relegating the continent's original inhabitants to the unenviable role of primitive savages. The growth of an environmental consciousness among more and more Americans gave new legitimacy to American Indians' criticisms of and opposition to development and exploitation of the land and its resources.

B. The Evolution of American Political Democracy

We have to be careful *not* to posit an inevitable march of democracy and progress -- or an equally invalid American fall from grace and innocence. The paradox of American political democracy is that, while America (both as British colonies and later as an independent nation) was by far the freest part of the Western world in whatever period, American democracy was at the same time deeply and agonizingly inconsistent. To cite two obvious examples, the nation barred African-Americans from citizenship and suffrage (constitutionally, until Reconstruction; legally and practically, until the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and 1960s, if then) and excluded women (from suffrage, until 1920; from full equality under the law, to the present day).

American political development encompasses a wide variety of institutional frameworks and intellectual assumptions. The range of institutional frameworks goes from the various Indian political systems, to the Spanish and British colonial empires, to the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of 1787. The constitutional system itself changed character even within the nineteenth century, going from the antebellum Constitution of limited federal power, to the Civil War ordeal of the Constitution, to the activist Constitution of the Reconstruction era, to the late nineteenth-century Constitution of a permanent Union, subordinate states, and restrained federal power. Then, in the twentieth century, the constitutional system experienced the rise, first during the Progressive era and then in the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, of the activist state; then endured an agonizing reappraisal and curtailment of activist government in the 1970s and 1980s; and now, in the 1990s, is attempting a tentative revival of activist government.

Ideas about government -- its appropriate sphere of activity and its appropriate limits -- also have mutated throughout American history. Although we address this subject more fully in the next subsection, we can understand the history of American political democracy as a succession of readjustments to such balances as:

1. national authority v. state sovereignty/rights
2. majority rule v. minority rights
3. democratic power v. judicial review
4. activist state v. individual liberty
5. traditional values v. individual liberty
6. separation of powers v. checks and balances
7. executive power v. congressional oversight

No matter what specific, time-based variations we may discern in the development of American political democracy, the American political system is a collection of ever-shifting balances held in delicate equipoise.

American political democracy may also be seen as the gradual expansion of what the historian Henry Adams once called the "political population" -- that is, those who had the power to take part in governing themselves. Beginning in the colonial period and persisting into the early Republic, the political population encompassed (with only a few local exceptions) white Christian males with a sufficient amount of property to establish their political independence. In the early and middle 1800s, the abolition of property qualifications and all but the broadest religious tests dramatically expanded the political population -- but barriers of race and sex still barred African-Americans and women from direct participation in politics. The Civil War and the Fifteenth Amendment broadened the political population further to include African-American men and men from other racial minorities (in theory). The Western territories' desire to win statehood drove many of them to recognize women as members of the political population, and in 1920 nearly a century of struggle by women led to the Nineteenth Amendment, which brought women within the political population. Still other reforms eliminated such bars to political participation as the poll tax (the last remaining vestige of the colonial-era property requirements) and lowered the voting age to eighteen.

This succession of hard-won reforms, most of which ultimately took the form of amendments to the Constitution, looks good on paper -- but students ought to consider for themselves whether these achievements are true victories for expanding democracy or only paper triumphs.

C. The Evolution of American Political Ideas

Although scholars might disagree as to the following list, we identify eight major ideas that have driven American politics for centuries and that still drive American politics today:

i. liberty (or freedom): the general idea that human beings are free, that they are not owned (whether by other human beings or by society at large), that they have freedom to live their own lives and to decide what shape those lives ought to take. This idea is at the heart of the key documents of the American political tradition -- specifically, the Declaration of Independence (1776), Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (1863) and Second Inaugural Address (1865)[5], and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech (1963) -- and is what peoples in other lands focus on first in their understanding of American history.

ii. individual rights: In a way a subset of the general concept of liberty or freedom, individual rights are ideas as to what government may not interfere with in the individual's life -- for example, freedom of religion means that government may not tell us whether or how to practice our religious faith; freedoms of speech and press mean that government may not dictate or limit the views we express; criminal procedure rights are conditions that the government must satisfy before it can bring its weight down on us to punish us; and so forth. In the twentieth

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[5]See Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

century, individual rights have expanded to include *affirmative* rights -- defined and protected by statute and by the constitutional doctrine of equal protection of the laws -- to such things as unemployment insurance and social security.

iii. equality: Explicit in the Declaration of Independence and implicit in the original Constitution, but first given explicit federal protection by the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause, equality (the right to equal treatment) also has been a powerful American political idea -- as an actual condition of American life, as a goal toward which Americans aspired, or both. And yet the exact nature of American equality as an actual condition of life and as a national aspiration has always been subject to controversy. One vital question that students should confront in considering the theme of equality in American history is, "How sincere is the American aspirations to achieve equality for all the American people -- including those who differ in race, sex, ethnicity, religion, culture, or economic status from those Americans with political power?" This question is posed most starkly by the history of African-Americans' struggle for legal, political, and social equality, but it is equally challenging when applied to the historical experiences of such groups as women, non-Christian Americans, or Hispanic-Americans.

iv. the rule of law: The rule of law always has been a fundamental principle of American politics; it is also the basis for constitutional government (discussed immediately below). Although Americans' understandings of the nature of the rule of law have changed over time, Tom Paine's proud boast that "in America the law is king" has been a centerpiece of American political ideology. The rule of law connects with equality, for anyone from the richest to the poorest expects the law to bind or protect him or her equally. The rule of law also is closely linked to individual rights, for rights are to be protected by such institutions as courts, which embody and defend the ideal of rule of law. And, of course, in the Anglo-American common-law tradition, the rule of law is generally regarded as the basic safeguard of the general concepts of liberty and freedom.

v. constitutional government: In some ways, as the noted Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell argued,[6] American contributions to the theory and practice of constitutional government may well be the most enduring American contributions to politics, and to human civilization. These contributions include the idea of a written constitution; the development of the constitutional convention as a means for writing constitutions; the invention of the ratifying convention or popular referendum as a means for the whole political population to decide whether to approve or reject constitutions; and the specific features of the Constitution of 1787 as amended -- separation of powers, checks and balances, constitutional protection of liberties and rights, limited government, effective government, constitutional change, and judicial review.

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[6]Daniel Bell, "The End of American Exceptionalism," in Daniel Bell, *The Winding Passage* (1980; New York: Harper Torchbook, 1981).

vi. the democratic republic: This seemingly simple phrase actually stands for the complex and evolving American model of a democratic republic, one based on the people, who elect (directly or indirectly) those to whom they entrust the power of government for limited periods. It also encompasses the whole development of the American political system, including the often problematic growth of democracy (see subpart B above), the creative development of democratic politics, and the evolution of the federal system (see immediately below).

vii. federalism: As noted under subpart A above, federalism was a consequence of American geography and the complex spectrum of interests and differences among the peoples of the several states. The task of dividing and balancing powers between the states and the federal government, again, cannot achieve a final, permanently stable form; it must always remain in a delicate tension, responsive to the specific challenges of each period. The idea of federalism has long fascinated political theorists throughout the world as a possible way to preserve the unity of political populations divided by religion, ethnicity, or culture; the American variant has become increasingly influential precisely because it seems over time to have accomplished those goals for the American people (see also subpart F below).

viii. judicial review: In some ways, judicial review -- the entrusting, to an unelected body of judges, of the power to interpret the Constitution to regulate the actions of the democratically-elected parts of the political system -- is the most remarkable American political invention. What most Americans do not understand is the constraints on the courts' power of judicial review -- (a) the requirement that unelected judges explain and justify every assertion of this power; (b) the scrutiny of judges' exercises of this power by the rest of the government, the legal profession, and the people as a whole; and (c) the prospect, via the amending process, that the people (through their elected representatives at the national and state levels of government) might overturn a decision of the United States Supreme Court purporting to hand down an authoritative interpretation of the Constitution as reason for striking down action by the democratically-elected components of government.

These word-portraits of these basic American political ideas are designed to convey their essences over time and suggest some of the ways they have changed over time. That their meaning subtly changes, and their relative importance shifts, over time are truisms of American history.

D. The Evolution of American Society

This theme intersects and weaves together other themes -- the diversity resulting from American geography (subpart A), and from the coming together of a remarkable range of peoples and cultures (subpart F); the evolution of American political democracy (subpart B) and political ideas (subpart C) as forces shaping the growth and development of society; the growth and development of a distinctive American culture as a component of society, drawing on and synthesizing the range of cultures brought to America (subpart E); the influence on society of economic growth (the rise of an independent and healthy American economy -- subpart G), diversification (the development of a range of industrial enterprises, and the gradual division of

society into sections and regions, and into urban, rural, and suburban areas -- subparts A, C.vii, and G), and transformation (from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy to a postindustrial/service economy -- subpart G).

Another important historical (and modern) issue falls under this heading. Some students of American history argue that inquiries into the nation's social history should emphasize the development and evolution of class lines within the great body of the people; others reject a narrow, European-based definition of class as inapplicable to American life, without inquiring into the exact nature of this supposedly "classless" society. We seek a middle ground, rejecting old ideas of class (like those found in pre-1789 France) while nonetheless acknowledging the development and growth of social stratification in American life (though much simpler and less rigid than its European, Asian, or Latin American counterparts).

In general, social stratification based on birth -- the heart of which was a vague but socially important distinction between "gentlemen" and "the common sort" -- was a fact of life during the colonial period. It received its first abrupt and serious shocks during the Revolution and early national periods, was severely damaged during the years before the Civil War, and was shattered by the war and Reconstruction. Social stratification then achieved a new basis (of wealth, entrepreneurship, ethnicity, and the rise of the professions and the new managerial middle class) in the late nineteenth century. On this basis, social stratification and diversification of society continued to grow and develop throughout the twentieth century. Barriers that excluded women and members of religious, racial, and ethnic minorities from the professions gradually diminished in power in the middle and late twentieth century (though never fading away). Still, Americans, whether consciously or unconsciously, continued to recognize and shape their lives by reference to such social distinctions as the kinds of jobs or careers they pursued; the nature and extent of education they were able to amass; the places where they could afford to live; and the kinds of homes they had or cars they drove.

An essential component of any account of the evolution of American society as a theme of American history is the history of struggles by excluded groups -- most notably African-Americans and women -- to break into the political population and the mainstream of American life. Although the modern civil-rights movement established the model for other modern rights campaigns to follow, movements for rights, justice, and equality for excluded groups began long before the modern paradigm -- of legal challenges to existing barriers, social and political protest, and educational activism -- was established.[7] These crusades had two components. At their core, at least at first, was a battle for legal equality and legal recognition of individual rights. Complementing and eventually overshadowing the legal battle was a larger social struggle, designed to capture the imagination and the allegiance of the general public by dramatizing the

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[7]For example, the abolitionist movement evolved side-by-side with the earliest campaigns for women's suffrage and women's rights; until the end of the Civil War these two movements acted in concert and nourished one another.

injustices suffered by the group seeking redress. This latter component of the struggle was driven by the recognition that legal equality was not full equality if it left undisturbed the social prejudices that lay at the root of discriminatory legal doctrines and practices.

E. The Question of a Distinctive American Culture

What is a national culture, and do Americans have one? The following is offered as a tentative definition only:

> *A nation's culture is its shared body of discrete ideas, patterns and habits of thought, customs, and modes of expression, all of which make up not only the nation's identity but its way of life, broadly defined. A national culture forms the set of conceptual lenses through which that nation's people views the world and their place in it, as well as their dealings with one another beyond the narrowly political and economic realms.*

The eminent sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset wrote an influential book describing the United States as "the first new nation"[8] -- that is, the first nation deliberately invented as a nation, lacking most of the traditional determinants of national identity. The American people chose to be a nation; for this reason, one of the most important components of a distinctive American culture is American political culture, which includes institutional arrangements, political ideas and beliefs, and habits and patterns of political behavior.[9]

But there is a distinctive American culture beyond its political component. It has developed in a three-stage process:

• *Americans prove that they have a culture*. Beginning in the colonial period and persisting into the years before the Civil War, Americans set out to prove to Europeans that they were not unlettered, provincial colonials existing on the edge of civilization -- that they, too, could achieve greatly in such fields as literature, art, science, and technology.

• *Americans prove that they have their own culture*. Ironically, this stage (which dominated the period from the 1820s through the end of the nineteenth century and, to a lesser extent, well into the twentieth century) was the mirror-image of the first stage. Now Americans

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[8]Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (1960; revised ed., New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

[9]See, e.g., Michael Kammen, *A Machine That Would Go of Itself: The Constitution in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986); Richard B. Bernstein with Kym S. Rice, *Are We to Be a Nation? The Making of the Constitution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Richard B. Bernstein with Jerome Agel, *Amending America: If We Love the Constitution So Much, Why Do We Keep Trying to Change It?* (New York: Times Books, 1993).

believed that they had to demonstrate, not that they had a culture at all, but that the culture they had was their own, independent creation rather than a derivative offshoot of Europe.

• *Americans invent cultural forms, examples, and forces that influence world culture.* This stage, which began in the mid-nineteenth century[10] and persists to this day, goes beyond the traditional forms of "high" culture such as written literature (novels, plays, short stories, essays, and so forth) and the fine arts (painting, sculpture, music). One of the foremost examples of American culture reshaping the world is the field of science and technology. The list of American technological inventions and advances with world impact include achievements in energy and power generation and transmission (steam, electricity, nuclear power); communications (telegraph, telephone, motion pictures, radio, television); transportation (steam-powered ships capable of crossing oceans, automobiles, aircraft, spacecraft); information science (computers and electronic data storage); and military technology (nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, space satellites). Another cultural sphere in which the United States has transformed the world is popular culture -- the development and spread of mass media (motion pictures, radio, and television programming);[11] music (ragtime, jazz, musical comedy, big bands, country & western, and the myriad forms of rock and roll); genre entertainment (mysteries, science fiction); fast food; clothing (for example, blue-jeans and T-shirts); and so forth.

F. America as a Gathering of Peoples and Cultures

American ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity are historical facts as old as the first European settlements -- older, if we keep in mind the extraordinary range of cultures among the American Indians. Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy are only two of the leading Americans who have had to remind their compatriots that we are all descendants of immigrants and that the United States is a nation of immigrants, all the stronger for its remarkable cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity protected (at least in theory) by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Fourteenth Amendment.

This theme -- "America as a gathering of peoples and cultures" -- embodies a vitally important and deeply troubling paradox of American history. Immigration always has been the most important way that this gathering of peoples and cultures has taken place. For most of American history, Americans who were already here (except for the American Indians, who viewed the influx of European immigrants with apprehension and skepticism) cheerfully drew on immigration as an essential resource to continue the building of American society and the

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[10]If political ideas, models, and practices are lumped together as political culture and thus deemed a subset of culture, then this stage of American cultural history began, with respect to political culture, in the late eighteenth century.

[11]Note that television is culturally influential in two ways -- as a new technology of communication and as perhaps the single most successful medium of popular culture in human history.

expansion of the American nation. And yet the celebration of immigration as a general concept has always coexisted uneasily with an often virulent dislike of and distrust for many of the major ethnic, racial, and religious groups that made up the successive waves of immigration. Nativist opposition to immigration is a recurring undercurrent of American political and social history; the groups that have been the focus of hostility, distrust, and persecution include immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Southern and Eastern Europe, China, Japan, Korea, India, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, and Africa; Catholics, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, believers in Shinto and Santeria; and so forth. Targets of persecution also include, and always have included, the oldest Americans -- American Indians, who (as noted earlier) until our own time were stigmatized as primitive savages incapable of becoming "civilized."

For much of the twentieth century, Americans celebrated the idea of the "melting pot" into which peoples from all over the world leaped, only to be poured out as Americans. In the last two decades, some Americans have suggested that the image of the melting pot be supplanted by that of the American mosaic. In the American mosaic, each ethnic, cultural, religious, or racial group retains its distinctive heritage and identity yet plays a vital part in creating a larger, more comprehensive American nation. The metaphor of the mosaic arguably may be closer to the spirit of the national motto ("E pluribus unum" -- or "out of many, one") than is the metaphor of the melting pot. But it has not yet prevailed in a nation where many Americans (themselves descendants of immigrants) still insist that newer immigrants must submerge themselves in a pre-existing "American" identity. The great challenge that faces the American republic, after more than two centuries of struggling with the challenges and the difficulties of diversity, is to work out a new consensus on the appropriate balance between the claims of different group identities and the goal of identifying an American common ground.

G. The Development of an American Economy

Today, in an age where Americans are increasingly concerned about the nation's ability to cope in a global economy, it is vital to address the history of the American economy -- how it began; how it developed over time, adapting to new challenges and new opportunities; how it gradually became an important part of the world economy; and what effects it has had on the other components of American history.

The economy of American Indians has long been dismissed as a "primitive" economy, emphasizing hunting and gathering, only gradually adapting to include the cultivation of crops. Recent scholars have tried to redress the balance by redefining "primitive" to remove its pejorative connotations, by emphasizing the harmony between the economic life of American Indian nations and the environment, and by demonstrating how American Indians' advice to and education of European settlers was vital to the survival of those settlers.

From settlement to the American Revolution, the American economy was a "colonial" economy, in which the colonies provided raw materials (crops, iron ore, timber for ships, furs, cotton, and so forth) to -- and for the benefit of -- the mother country. The colonies had more direct economic contact with Great Britain, or its Caribbean possession, than they did with one

another. One vital force leading to the American colonies' breach with the mother country was the colonists' growing resentment of their dependent, subsidiary role in the economic life of the British Empire.

The period between the Revolution and the Civil War witnessed the growth of a young national economy. Although still largely agricultural, the economy also fostered the development of manufacturing and industry (complemented by the rise of a fledgling labor movement). Serious and vigorous economic and political competition among the sections (North, South, and West) was a primary force shaping the development of American politics. At the same time, the nation slowly developed the foundations of a unified national economic system. This consolidation of American economic life was driven by such technological developments as the invention of the steamboat, the railroad, and the telegraph; by the development of new economic enterprises (e.g., railroad and telegraph systems) capitalizing on these technological advances; and by the linking of the nation's several regions through the construction of "internal improvements" such as canals and roads and toll bridges. The Union's possession of these economic advantages was a major factor in its victory over the Confederacy in the Civil War.

In the decades following the Civil War, the United States established itself as a major factor in the world economy. Development of new means of communication and transportation further knitted a national economy together, making possible the rise of great industrial enterprises. Legal ingenuity also assisted the growth of these enterprises by the development of such forms of organization as the business corporation, the trust, and the holding company. At the same time, this period witnessed the rise of dissatisfaction among American labor; craft and industrial workers attempted to organize themselves into unions to protect the rights of individual workers from the disproportionately great and growing power of corporate management.

One of the driving forces behind the Populist and Progressive Movements was the demand for government action either to break up the consolidations of great wealth and economic power or to control the powers these consolidated entities wielded, in order to protect the worker and the individual consumer. Thus, in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s one of the great spheres of activity for government was the enactment of laws and the establishment of the first regulatory agencies to restrain the powers of business. In the 1920s and early 1930s, however, an aggressively pro-business climate led either to the retrenchment or the abandonment of these efforts.

The feverish growth of the economy in the 1920s, and the indifference to the potential drawbacks and weaknesses of that expansion, carried in their wake the catastrophe of the Great Depression (1929-1941), which in turn led to a profound shift in American thinking about the relationship between government and the economy. The programs of the New Deal at first focused on controlling the dangers and defects of economic competition; when these programs turned out to be constitutionally invalid and economically ineffective, the New Deal shifted emphasis to controlling the deleterious effects of an unregulated economy, establishing the

"safety net" that has minimized the effects of later severe economic downturns.

The war years and the two decades that followed were the high-point of American economic history. Dazzled observers believed that the remarkably vigorous growth of the American economy was here to stay; they hailed the creation of a new middle class of well-paid industrial workers, middle managers, and professionals as the realization of the "American dream."

The period since the late 1960s has demonstrated that the "American dream" was short-lived. Two clusters of developments spelled the end of Americans' dreams of continuing economic and social prosperity: First, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a continuing climate of economic recession and industrial retrenchment led to the loss of thousands of jobs. Second, in the 1970s and early 1980s, American corporations seemed increasingly unable to compete with the industries and products of foreign competitors -- specifically German and Japanese electronics and automobile manufacturers. In particular, the successful Japanese challenge to the primacy of the American automobile industry spelled economic disaster, not just for the "big three" auto manufacturers, but also for the dozens of industries (for example, steel) dependent on a healthy domestic automobile industry. In the 1980s, many Americans believed that the "malaise" of the 1970s was at an end. But the 1980s was an era of feverish economic "growth" based not on the real flowering of productive industry but on the ever-more-frantic manipulations of corporate takeovers and stock manipulation. In the years following the 1987 stock-market crash, The 1980s' house of cards collapsed; worried observers suggested that the American economy's ills were perhaps endemic, and that it was necessary to reconceive what the goals and emphases of the nation's economic system should be.

H. The Changing Role of America in the World

The place of America in the world has changed dramatically since European explorers confirmed the existence of the American continents. America has been a potent and complex symbol -- of the possibilities of wealth and power; of the promise of freedom; of a haven for the persecuted, the homeless, and the stateless. The founding of new societies in the Americas has also helped to expand the world's intellectual horizons, to transform the economic life of the human race and create a truly global economy, and to provide a new and vigorous force in every aspect of world culture. But these profound American influences on world civilization have taken place (since 1776) through the world's framework of nation-states. And, in the modern era, efforts to come to grips with world problems most take account of concepts and doctrines of national sovereignty -- however outmoded such doctrines might appear to be in an era of global warming and environmental crisis. In this section, therefore, we find it necessary to emphasize the evolution of American foreign policy.

Americans always have been ambivalent about their nation's place in the world, veering between the desire to preach their own virtue as a model for the rest of the world and the equally strong desire to tell the rest of the world to go hang itself and leave the United States alone. As noted above, this complex and contradictory approach to America's place in the community of

nations was shaped, in part, by geography -- the insulation of the Americas by two great oceans from the concerns of Europe and Asia. In part, as George Washington pointed out in his 1796 Farewell Address, it also was a matter of necessity, even of self-preservation -- a consequence of the initial exceptional status of the United States as a fledgling democratic republic in a world of hostile, monarchic world powers.

Thus, for much of American history before the twentieth century, the American republic was serenely indifferent to the rest of the world, except when the rest of the world impinged on American interests (as with Thomas Jefferson's disastrous embargo against European belligerents in 1807 or the equally disastrous War of 1812) or when an American neighbor possessed something that the American people wanted (for example, Great Britain possessing Canada [1812]; Mexico possessing Texas and California [1845-1848]; Spain possessing Puerto Rico and Cuba [1898]). Even when the United States "opened" Japan in 1853, the effort was undertaken largely because of American resentment that Japan would not offer port privileges to American whalers cruising the Pacific, or aid to whalers and commercial vessels experiencing difficulties near Japanese waters. The one great exception was the Monroe Doctrine (1823), and that was still a reassertion of the insulation of the New World from the greed and depredations of the Old, however much later Administrations sought to distort it into a blank check authorizing the United States to dictate to its Latin American neighbors how they should govern themselves and how they should deal with their powerful American neighbor.

In the twentieth century, as European powers set out to carve empires for themselves in Africa and Asia, the United States at first decided to join the fray, albeit in the posture of a fair arbiter seeking to restrain European greed. The classic example was Secretary of State John Hay's Open Door policy for China (1900). And yet the arm's-length, idealistic component of American thinking about world affairs was alive and well. Thus, when President Woodrow Wilson sought to dictate to the rest of the world how the victorious and vanquished powers of the First World War should behave toward one another, he was drawing on a diplomatic tradition as old as the Republic.

With the collapse of the Wilsonian initiative to rewrite the rules of world politics, the United States returned to its posture of serene indifference to the world beyond the Western Hemisphere. Only the development by Germany and Japan of the capacity to bring military power to bear across the previously impregnable shields of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans persuaded the American people that they had to take a hand in world affairs.

In many ways, the Second World War was the highpoint of American participation in the community of nations. The United States, under the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S Truman, resurrected the Wilsonian ideals of a transformed world politics, to be purged of wars of aggression and colonial empires. Even the development of the Cold War (1945-1991)

between the democratic West and the Communist East[12] fitted well within the Wilsonian model of what the United States should do as a world power. The development of nuclear and thermonuclear arsenals created a new category on the international scene -- the superpower, a nation possessing the might to affect the lives of virtually every inhabitant of the planet. At first, the concept was used only in military terms, limiting the "superpower club" to two members, the United States and the U.S.S.R. In the 1980s, the idea of an economic superpower emerged, with Japan and Germany as leading exemplars.

The difficulty during the Cold War was that the United States soon discovered the limits of being a superpower. The risks of nuclear war made a titanic struggle to destroy the power of world Communism at best unpalatable. The inability to use conventional military power to foster democracy or to combat indigenous revolution (either under the banner of Communism or stigmatized as such by its adversaries) brought increasing frustration in its wake. If the Second World War became the model for Americans of a "good war," and a good foreign policy, the ambiguous Korean Conflict and the failed Vietnam Conflict became models for how not to conduct foreign policy.

IV. CONCLUSION

These sets of themes and chronological periods were devised together and should be used together. Only if students perceive these themes' and periods' subtle interaction will they begin to grasp the complex texture of the American past and start to develop the skills we hope to foster: critical thinking, perceiving connections and differences, gathering and using historical evidence, and making and analyzing arguments.

The summary discussions above, and the twelve chronological essays that follow, are only introductions to the rich, complex, and challenging body of ideas, information, and interpretation that makes up American history today.[13] In conclusion, we stress the point with which we began. Those who teach history, at whatever level and by whatever means, are partners in a common enterprise. We must work together to help one another in the challenging and vitally important task of preparing our students to understand the importance of the past both in and of itself and as a part of the present and the future.

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[12]The U.S.S.R., the Warsaw Pact nations, China, Cuba, and the Asian Communist nations of North Korea and North Vietnam.

[13]Following the chronological essays is a detailed bibliographical essay; the works listed there have been chosen with an eye to accessibility, scholarly authority, and availability.

ESSAY I
THE AMERICAS TO 1500

I. INTRODUCING METHODOLOGY IN THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

This period, which deals with the world the Indians knew before the arrival of European explorers, poses difficulties flowing mostly from the lack of the usual evidentiary foundation for doing history: written documents (for example, letters, speeches, treaties, constitutions, laws, books, newspapers, magazines, almanacs). This lack need not be a major obstacle to historical study, however. Indeed, one of the most important things we can accomplish in teaching this period is devising ways to give students a sense of the *spectrum* of methods that historians use to investigate and understand the past. We can give students a sense of the breadth and depth of the historian's task and the remarkable array of tools and techniques available to the historian to find out about the past.

In seeking to understand the first human beings who settled North and South America either 15,000 or 40,000 years ago (the dates are a matter of vigorous historical dispute), historians use some or all of the following:[1]

- *archaeology* (digs for artifacts, examinations of burial sites, close study of ancient constructions such as the cliff dwellings of the western United States, or the mounds left by the mound-builder peoples of the southeastern United States);

- *comparative religion and folklore*: the study of creation myths, legends, and folktales told by Indian peoples;

- *medicine*: tracing such biological factors as human bloodtypes to show how different peoples (the Aztec, the Comanche, the Seminole, the Kwakiutl) may well share a common ancestry, or studying the differing responses of Indian and European peoples to diseases to illustrate how contact between the cultures occasionally proved fatal to the indigenous culture;

- *geology, climatology, and ecology*: to reconstruct the land as the Indians found it, to identify the ways they lived off the land and in harmony with it, and to provide a basis for comparison between Indian and European understandings of the relationship between human beings and the natural world;

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[1]This is all illustrated in a superb NOVA documentary on PBS, "Searching for the First Americans" (October 20, 1992).

• *linguistics*: to trace the origins and development of Indian languages and the genealogy of Indian language families;[2]
• *anthropology*: to identify shared cultural elements and cultural distinctions between Indian peoples;

• and even *"conventional" techniques of history*: e.g., close interpretation of such historical documents as Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, George Catlin's *Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* (both text and illustrations) or James Mooney's anthropological treatise *The Ghost Dance Religion*, in order to sort out the facts of how American Indians lived and saw themselves as distinct from how European travelers saw them.

One last preliminary question: What is a culture? What do we mean when we talk about a given people's culture? James Axtell has provided a definition of culture that, in many ways, illustrates the problems of grappling with this slippery concept:

> *A culture is an idealized pattern of meanings, values, and norms differentially shared by the members of a society, which can be inferred from the non-instinctive behavior of the group and from the symbolic products of their actions, including material artifacts, language, and social institutions.*[3]

The following reworking of Axtell's definition may make it more accessible and useful:

> *A culture is the body of ideas, ways of looking at the world, values, and standards for conduct and behavior that a given people or nation hold in common. It includes the range of meanings that people assign to their own perceptions and behavior, as well as to the natural world around them. We can define the elements of that culture, and understand how they fit together as a culture, by examining that people's customs, language, religion, material artifacts, and social and political institutions.*

That Indian peoples lacked some of the elements of European culture (for example, the wheel, firearms, horses, the Roman Catholic or Protestant Christian faiths) led many Europeans and

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[2]Note that Thomas Jefferson was a pioneer in such studies; one of the major responsibilities of the Lewis and Clark expedition was to collect information on Indian languages and vocabularies.

[3]James Axtell, *The European and the Indian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 6. Note that the definitions of "culture" provided here have different purposes from those of the definition of "culture" provided in the Introduction. Here, we focus on the concept as it enables us to understand so-called "primitive" peoples, whereas the definition provided in the Introduction is intended to guide our exploration of the nature of a distinctive American culture as a component of American national identity and history.

their descendants to conclude -- erroneously -- that the Indians had no culture at all, or at least none that Europeans were bound to respect. This perception has, as noted above and emphasized below, distorted most later accounts of Indian history. In studying the Indians of the Americas, the first task that a modern scholar or teacher must carry out is to clear the ground of the discarded rubble of former "scholarship."[4]

II. INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

We begin American history with a great mystery and a great challenge. The mystery surrounds the people who were standing on the shores of the American continents and the Caribbean islands when the European explorers landed there -- by some recent estimates, over ten million people in South America and about four million in the region of North America that became the United States.[5] Who were they? Where did they come from? What were they like?

Too often in the past, the Indians have been part of the background for the grand, sanitized pageant of "discovery and settlement" -- the American continents have appeared in older histories as "empty," waiting for settlement, despite the presence of millions of indigenous inhabitants. Even when historians have acknowledged Indians' sufferings at the hands of European colonizers and conquerors, or their role in aiding or even saving those colonists, they are largely voiceless; we see them and hear them through European eyes and ears.

We all are aware just how controversial and difficult it is to do justice to Indian history and culture. For one thing, there is no clear agreement even as to what we are to call the peoples who originally populated the Americas. As the leading colonial ethnohistorian James Axtell has pointed out, most Native Americans now prefer the term "Indians," even though we all know how it evolved as a misnomer rooted in Columbus's misunderstanding of geography.

As noted above, many Indians left no historical evidence of the conventional documentary sort -- no narratives, no accounts of their people's pasts with exact names and dates, no treatises on their governance, agriculture, economy, or religion. How then do we tell their stories and understand them for themselves?

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[4]Of course, this task can veer too far in the other direction -- replacing myths based on discarded "scholarship" with new myths, designed to redress the balance between Indians and Europeans, based on equally vulnerable "scholarship." See, for example, James Axtell's fine essays on the modern historical myth that European settlers taught scalping to North American Indians.

[5]Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 1.

Second, for the most part, we have left the study of Indians to anthropologists and ethnologists. This is not to denigrate their work -- but, when we avail ourselves of it, we risk being caught in a painful bind. The implicit message of much of the older work of this type, of many "eyewitness" accounts of the period from 1492 through 1890, and even of the idea that a people can be studied usefully *only* through scholarly disciplines usually applied to "primitive" peoples, is that Indians are somehow inferior to European. The corollary to this message is that, as "primitive" peoples, the Indians either "deserved" conquest by the Europeans, or needed to be "civilized" by the Europeans, or both.

To guard against this tendency, we should recall the warning of Claude Levi-Strauss, quoted by Alvin Josephy at the beginning of his classic book *The Indian Heritage of America*:

> *A primitive people is not a backward or retarded people; indeed it may possess a genius for invention or action that leaves the achievements of civilized peoples far behind.*

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While it is tempting to lump the Indians together as one people, and while most students may come into the class with that way of thinking firmly in place, we have to make certain that we recognize the extraordinary spectrum of diverse peoples, cultures, languages, customs, traditions, economies, and forms of society and government that compose the history of the Indian peoples of the Americas. As many significant differences -- in geographical location, language, politics, economics, religion, and culture -- distinguish the Mohawk from the Cherokee, the Sioux from the Seminoles, the Apaches from the Inuit, the Kwakiutl from the Mandan, the Maya from the Pueblo, the Inca from the Aztec, as distinguish the French from the Uzbeks, the Welsh from the Norwegians, or the Serbs from the Croats.

Also, as noted above, there is the problem of the stereotype of these peoples as "primitive." Certainly, many European explorers thought that Indians were primitive because they did not hold European ideas of the appropriate relations between human beings and land or natural resources -- ideas of dominion, ownership, and property. That view persisted well into the twentieth century.

But the failure to hold European views or ideas does not imply an absence of one's own views or ideas. Whatever the range of differences among them, the Indian peoples had their own histories and cultures, their own understandings of how to live in the world, their own systems of governance and law. Not only are these understandings, at least, worthy of respectful study -- they often can prove enlightening in and of themselves:

• *Indian religion* recognized the unity of all living things and taught reverence for life and for the earth. But the exact nature of Indian religious beliefs is still a matter of historical and cultural controversy -- was it a simple pantheism (seeing gods everywhere in everything) or a more sophisticated and structured set of beliefs recognizing a hierarchy of tutelary spirits and a

single, overarching creator or "Great Spirit?"

• *Indian ideas about property* are closely tied in certain key respects to their religion. For example, Indians believed for several reasons -- reverence for the earth, the equation of the earth with nature or air, and the tendency to think in communal rather than individualistic terms -- that it was silly or beside the point to talk of owning land. Exclusive possession of a given tract of land seemed outlandish to them, even though it was the core of the English common law. And yet, Indians believed that a person could own the products of the land; for example, a farmer could own his crops, hunters could own the fruits of their hunting, and those who made artifacts could own them. In addition, some Indian peoples believed that you could manipulate the environment in limited ways without forcing fundamental changes in it -- for example, by burning trees to create grasslands rich in game.

• *Indian ideas about government* once were dismissed by most Western observers as primitive or even savage -- though, of course, there were notable exceptions, including Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Today, by contrast, most scholars who study Indians treat their ideas about government and politics with as much respect as their colleagues devote to the study of the Founding Fathers, John Locke, or the constitutional jurisprudence of the United States Supreme Court. Some Indian peoples, such as those of the Iroquois Confederation, did possess what we would recognize as democratic methods of governance, emphasizing reasoned deliberation, fostering political argument and oratory, recognizing the participation of women in politics, devising parallels to what we call federalism, and stressing the need for supermajorities, consensus, or even unanimity in reaching key decisions.[6] Other peoples, such as the Inca of Peru or the Maya and the Aztec of Mexico, created vast empires whose authority was grounded in religion and which exerted almost totalitarian power over their subjects equal in efficiency to that of any European empire.

• *Indian ideas about law* are similarly different from European ideas, but recent scholars,

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[6]This tendency can be taken too far. Some writers maintain that Indians invented democracy and democratic institutions, and that European colonists stole these ideas for themselves without even acknowledging their source. The more likely view is that the Revolutionary generation was familiar with the various forms of Indian government, including the Iroquois Confederation, and that such governments were among the exemplars and sources from which Revolutionary constitution-makers synthesized the ideas that gave rise to the state and federal constitutions. See, e.g., Donald A. Grinde, Jr., and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: University of California -- American Indian Studies Center, 1991); Oren Lyons, John Mohawk, Vine Deloria, Jr., Laurence Hauptman, Howard Berman, Donald Grinde, Jr., Curtis Berkey, and Robert Venables, *Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations, and the U.S. Constitution* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1992).

such as Professor John Phillip Reid of New York University Law School,[7] have come to recognize that Indian peoples did possess legal systems, even without written codes of laws, records of judicial decisions, or formal systems of legislatures and courts. We need not explore this issue in depth; it is enough to say that they had laws grounded in customs, and that these customary systems of laws served such peoples as the Cherokee very well.

• *Indian achievements in science and technology* were considerable, and even now receive respectful study by historians of architecture, astronomy, and agriculture. The Mayan calendar was at least as accurate as calendars devised by Europeans, and Mayan astronomical observations are sophisticated and accurate enough to be used by astronomers and historians of astronomy to test the work and confirm the observations of European astronomers. And yet, by the time the Europeans first came to the Americas, no indigenous American society or culture had yet developed the use of wheeled vehicles. (The Indians' failure to discover the wheel is not a measure of scientific, technological, or cultural "backwardness." All it proves is that different societies pursue science and technology in different ways, and that technological insights such as the wheel are not inevitable.)

• *Indian economies* were shaped by their geography, climate, and ecology. As noted above, some Indian peoples were primarily hunters and grazers, while others were primarily agricultural, and still others possessed complex, sophisticated, and successful mixed economies that rivaled European economic systems.

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One last point: Again, all these areas remain controversial in the extreme, implicating as they do such disputes as whether Indian peoples are "primitive" and whether the concept of "primitive" is useful or even appropriate in analyzing a different people's culture and way of life.

Further, as we see in Essay II, a complicating factor in the study of the Americas before the arrival of European explorers and settlers is the idea -- widely circulated and discussed during the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the "New World" -- that the Europeans dispossessed the rightful inhabitants of these continents, and that all later American civilization and history, however notable and estimable its achievements and ideals, is based on a colossal series of acts of expropriation, fraud, and genocide.

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[7]John Phillip Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970); John Phillip Reid, *A Better Kind of Hatchet* (State College: Penn State University Press, 1975). See also the studies cited in note 4.

ESSAY II
CONTACT: EUROPE AND AMERICA MEET, 1492-1620

I. REINTERPRETING THE ENCOUNTER

Just in time for the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's voyages to the Americas, historians have abandoned the rhetoric of discovery -- or, at least, brought it under severe control. No longer do we say that Columbus and the other European explorers "discovered" America. Rather, the European voyagers encountered Indian peoples and cultures who had been present in the Americas for hundreds or even thousands of years.

As John Noble Wilford has pointed out, the quincentenary of Columbus's voyages differed profoundly from the quadricentenary of 1892 and the tercentenary of 1792 -- both of which emphasized the unalloyed benefits of the "discovery of America" and the bravery and modernity of Columbus's thought and enterprise.[1] In part, of course, the 1892 omission of Indian peoples from the commemoration of Columbus, except as anthropological curiosities, stemmed from the series of Indian wars that ranked with the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War as determinants of American foreign and military policy. The Indians were conquered foes, perceived as being somewhere on the spectrum between brave enemies and savage primitives. To accord them equal billing with the great Christopher Columbus was, to their way of thinking, ridiculous.

The shift from the emphases of the quadricentenary to those of the quincentenary reflects the dramatic transformation in twentieth-century American views of the Indians (see Essay I) -- of their status as indigenous peoples, of the dignity and worth of their cultures, of the plausibility and validity of their ideas about the proper relationships between human beings and the natural world, and of the sufferings they endured at the hands of white explorers, settlers, and conquerors. It also reflects two other factors: (1) post-Vietnam doubts about America's role in the world and (2) the problems posed by the conflict between defenders of Western culture and attackers of "cultural imperialism."

Nonetheless, although this conceptual shift may look to some like "political correctness," it makes good sense. It recognizes that what we used to call the "Discovery of America" was

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[1]But, in the 1780s, the French clergyman Abbe Raynal sponsored an essay contest, open to anyone in the Atlantic civilization, for the best essay on the question, "Was America a Mistake?" This question, the theme of Raynal's *History of the Two Indies*, forms the basis for an excellent documentary anthology (now, alas, out of print): Henry Steele Commager and Elmo Giordanetti, eds., *Was America a Mistake? An Eighteenth-Century Controversy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

really a "first contact" (of the sort beloved by fans of science fiction) between two sets of civilizations and cultures. (Indeed, European colonists in North America would not have survived without the aid of the Indian peoples who greeted and befriended them and taught them what crops to cultivate, what game to hunt, and how to build shelters.) This first contact, however, was not governed by the "prime directive" of noninterference familiar to devotees of *Star Trek*. Most European explorers, conquerors, colonizers, and missionaries felt few compunctions about interfering with indigenous cultures -- by deliberate force (as with Francisco Pisarro's 1531-1533 conquest of the Inca empire in Peru), by a combination of force and accident (as with Hernando Cortes's unsuccessful 1518 assault on the Aztec empire in Mexico, which exposed the Aztec to smallpox that devastated the population and made Cortes's 1521 attack a success), or by accident (95 percent of the Maya people of Mexico succumbed to diseases contracted due to contact with Europeans).

There were some beneficial results of contact, however; Europeans introduced new technologies, crops, and domestic animals to the Americas, and Indian peoples absorbed these innovations into their own cultures and economies. And, even though Spanish authorities insisted on supplanting (often by forcible conversion) indigenous religions with Roman Catholicism, the Roman Catholic clergy soon emerged as powerful advocates for justice for native peoples. Ultimately, however, Europeans received the great majority of the benefits of American colonization.

II. EXPLORATION, CONQUEST, EXPLOITATION, COLONIZATION

The story of this period is more than the story of contact between Europeans and Indians. It is also the story of the Europeans' attempts to found colonies in the Americas -- some as bases for exploration, conquest, and exploitation; others as permanent colonies.

How do we tell the story of this period? The best way is to synthesize an array of older and newer historical and pedagogical methods. There are two areas of special concern in studying the period of contact:

1. *The chronology of exploration, conquest, and colonization*: Traditionally, teachers have marched their students through the roster of explorers, discoverers, conquerors, and empire-builders, whether in strict chronological order, geographical order, or a combination of the two (that is, in the order established by the succession of European nations in exploration, conquest, and colonization -- first the Portuguese, then the Spanish, and then the English, French, Dutch, and Swedish).

This chronology is still worth giving to students -- as long as we tell them why they need it and why they will find it useful. In essence, we can demonstrate the utility of chronology by illustrating how it provides (1) a basic framework on which they can hang additional ideas and information, and (2) context, background, and useful juxtapositions that enable them to make

historical connections and begin learning how to interpret history for themselves. If we explain the utility and necessity of absorbing the chronology, they will not approach it as just another arid, useless set of dates, names, and events. (This point is true across the whole sweep of American history -- not just in this period.)

For example, there remains considerable value in the traditional juxtaposition of the history of English exploration and discovery in the Americas with the ideas and achievements of the Renaissance in England. At the same time, however, we should not fall into the hoary cliche that the Spanish were a backward-looking people in decline, merely because Spanish culture in the Renaissance does not resonate with modern American culture in the ways that English Renaissance culture does.

2. Rather than just treating the succession of European voyages, settlements, and colonies as a kind of proto-Amtrak timetable, we and our students must grapple with the spectrum of *goals, purposes, and methods* followed by the various European nations -- including their competition with one another.

Before we examine the differing motivations that European nations had to come to the Americas, we should analyze the factors they had in common. All the European nations were beginning to experience a massive growth in population, recovering from the terrible depredations of the Black Death of the fourteenth century. Population growth brought in its wake the growth of national economies, the growth of consumer demand (including demand for exotic products), and the development of advances in shipbuilding and navigation, so that mariners could compete more effectively in the mercantile traffic of fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century Europe. The resurgence of commerce also gave a powerful impetus to the forces of centralization and nationalism, building powerful new monarchic nations whose leaders were intent on consolidating their claims to power by cultivating and fostering the economic development of their nations. Finally, European nations, fascinated by and hungry for increased trade with the wealthy nations of Asia (and inspired by the popular accounts of travelers such as the Venetian merchant Marco Polo), sought better and more effective routes of transportation and trade -- which, in turn, drove these governments to encourage advances in shipbuilding and navigation, and then voyages of exploration. (Much of this summary will be familiar from "older" accounts of the "Age of Discovery.")

To offer a few broad generalizations for each exploring and colonizing European nation (keeping in mind William Blake's warning, as quoted by Axtell -- "To generalize is to be an idiot"):

a. *The Spanish and the Portuguese* came to the Americas to pursue dreams of empire, both secular and religious. Although the Portuguese acquired Brazil under the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), the Spanish were the principal Iberian power in the Americas. Their religious aims were simple: to win these lands and peoples for Catholicism. Their secular aims included bringing Central and South America under their imperial governance to augment the power of

Spain in world affairs, seeking great wealth (both the gold and gems that were rumored to abound in the Americas), and gratifying their individual ambitions for power and glory (especially in a stratified society like Spain, the Americas offered intoxicating opportunities for social and political advancement).

As James Axtell points out, the old, powerful "Black Legend" that purported to describe the Spanish explorations, conquests, and colonial enterprises is largely a caricature. Under the terms of this legend, the Spanish colonists were *conquistadores* (conquerors) -- brutal men, interested only in loot, pillage, rape, and murder, who left a trail of savage destruction wherever they went. Even though many of the early Spanish *conquistadores* were interested only in gold and gems and were ruthless in their methods, emphasis on brutality and greed does not explain how the Spanish created a colonial empire in Latin America that lasted for more than two centuries (longer, indeed, than the British Empire lasted in that part of North America that we now know as the United States). The "Black Legend" has some basis, notably in the work of the Spanish priest and former *conquistador* Bartolome de Las Casas, who intended his impassioned histories[2] to persuade the Spanish monarchs to restrain the excesses of the expeditions of exploration, conquest, and conversion they had authorized. But, as Axtell notes, the "Black Legend" is also largely an artifact of nineteenth-century Protestant Americans of English or Anglo-Saxon ancestry who were convinced that Catholic lands and peoples were tyrannous, lazy, cruel, and semi-barbarous. It has thus obscured the stability, cultural achievements (including the founding of universities in Mexico older than any in North America), and occasional benificence of the Spanish colonies.

It also should be noted here that slavery (in particular, African slavery, because enslaving Indians proved unsuccessful) was introduced to the Americas by the Portuguese and the Spanish -- over a century before the first Africans arrived in Virginia (in 1619).[3] In part, the European slave traders joined a slave trade that was several centuries old, beginning with west Africans' selling slaves to Mediterranean traders in the eighth century.[4] Apparently, the small but continuous traffic in slaves, in which the Portuguese were the leading European practitioners, exploded in the fifteenth century when the Portuguese applied slavery to the cultivation of sugar

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[2]E.g., Bartolome de Las Casas (Anthony Pagden, ed.), *Brief History of the Destruction of the Indies* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992).

[3]This paragraph draws on the discussion in Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 15-17.

[4]Many west African societies did incorporate slavery into their social structures, independent of and before European contact. Their form of slavery, however, was different from the slavery that developed in the Americas. Slaves were never born into slavery -- those who became slaves were captives in war, criminals, or debtors who could not pay their debts. Their term of slavery lasted only for a specified period of years. They retained such rights as the right to marry, and their children were not born slaves. Brinkley, *Unfinished Nation*, 17.

cane, first in their Atlantic island colonies and then in Latin America. The Spanish quickly followed suit, to be succeeded in the seventeenth century by the Dutch and in the eighteenth century by the English.

b. *The French* also came to the Americas for wealth and power, but their methods were different. They did not seek to conquer the regions they explored and laid claim to -- only to repel the competing claims of rival powers like Spain and England and to establish a foothold for themselves in the American continents (a pattern followed as well by the Dutch and the Swedish, who sought to establish colonies as international economic bases, rather than as permanent settlements). The traditional view is that, because the French did not engage in a full-scale colonizing enterprise like that of the English, they missed a priceless opportunity. To be sure, that statement itself is based on a huge network of unarticulated assumptions about how a European nation "should" look upon the "opportunities" presented by the Americas.

c. *The English* were laggards in the race for the Americas, but, because they ultimately changed their understanding of the nature and purpose of colonies, the English colonies eventually were among the most successful in the Americas. At first, English explorers sought the same kinds of benefits that animated the Spanish, Portuguese, and French enterprises -- discovery of gold, jewels, and other valuable goods for trade and commerce. Gradually, the English shifted their emphasis to include the planting of self-maintaining colonies that, due to the structure of English government, politics, and political theory, acquired a measure of self-governance. As a result, traditional accounts of the English explorations and colonizations are remarkably benign, emphasizing the ideas that the founders of the colonies planted "seeds of democracy" in the "New World."

What drove the English to reconceptualize the nature and purpose of colonies? One factor was the disastrous Roanoke experiment of 1584. That colony, founded on the traditional model by Sir Walter Raleigh, disappeared without a trace within three years. The change in the nature of English colonies also grew out of a combination of economic factors. The growing demand for wool, which led many landowners to enclose their lands as pasturage for sheep, deprived many English families of farmland that they had used for subsistence farming. The growing number of landless poor, combined with a dramatic population growth (from three million in 1485 to four million by 1603), posed a major problem that, English officials became convinced, could be solved by exporting the "surplus population" to colonies in North America. Finally at the same time that the English were grappling with the challenges posed by the Americas, they also were struggling with the crises of religious divisions and sectarian rivalry. It therefore seemed a useful expedient to permit members of difficult religious minorities -- the most famous examples are the Pilgrims in 1620 and the Puritans in 1630 -- to leave England for America. The mother country would be safely insulated from these dissenting religious colonies by distance and the hardship of travel; mother country and colonies could thus leave one another alone.

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By the close of this period, the Europeans had only the most dim and uncertain ideas of how the new societies they had planted in the Americas would develop. The "voyages of discovery and exploration" set the stage for a reconceptualization of the European world. No longer would Europeans be limited to the European continent -- they would now occupy the land on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, creating what later scholars would call the Atlantic civilization. The development of the American component of that civilization is traced in Essay III.

ESSAY III
THE FOUNDING OF NEW SOCIETIES, 1607-1763

This period covers 156 years -- from the first permanent English settlement in North America (at Jamestown, Virginia) to the end of the Seven Years' War (known in North America as the French and Indian War). A comparable period of American history would stretch from the first inauguration of George Washington (1789) to the first inauguration of Harry S Truman (1945). And yet the colonial period blurs into one shapeless mass in the minds of nonspecialists -- especially in the minds of students. The challenge posed by this period is how to make it vivid and significant to students while preserving a sense of its inescapable differentness from the present. This essay sets forth the basic "points" of studying the colonial world.

I. THE DIFFERENTNESS OF THE COLONIAL WORLD

This "differentness" includes several key components:

• *Newness*: We tend to forget just how comparatively new the American world is. A good, unsettling illustration is to recall the 1992 fire at Windsor Castle, and then realize that that castle was standing long before any European settlement in the Americas.

The colonies were the first "new" societies in thousands of years of European history. The colonists who came to the Americas knew that they were taking part in the founding of new societies, the success of which was not foreordained by any stretch of the imagination. They remembered the Roanoke experiment (1584) in present-day North Carolina, and several other, less famous failed colonial ventures. They knew about the appalling loss of life in the first years of the Jamestown colony (1607) and the Plymouth colony (1620).

The colonies' political structures were likewise new, and their fragility helped exacerbate the contentiousness of colonial politics throughout the period. The problem of "newness" is further illustrated by the development of the colonies of Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut. Originally, there were two settlements in Massachusetts -- Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth -- and two settlements in Connecticut -- Connecticut and New Haven. By 1700, Massachusetts Bay had swallowed up Plymouth, and Connecticut had absorbed New Haven.

• *Monarchic Society*: This element of differentness is captured in the very word "colonial." The idea of being "colonial" is inextricably bound up with the political and

constitutional status of the colonies as appendages of England (after 1706, Great Britain).[1]

The English colonies were monarchic societies, acknowledging the sovereignty of the English Crown (except for the Commonwealth period, 1649-1660, following the execution of Charles I, when the colonies acknowledged the sovereignty first of the Commonwealth, and then of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector). This monarchic context had important consequences for the internal social and political structures of the colonies. Although classes in the colonies were neither so fixed nor so complex as the English social system, there were important distinctions between gentlemen, or "the better sort," and ordinary people, sometimes subdivided into "the middling sort" and "the lower sort." We see these distinctions, which at times achieved mind-numbing complexity, most clearly in the ways that Harvard and other colonial colleges ranked their students -- not by academic distinction, nor by alphabetical order, but by social rank.

These distinctions mattered most in colonial politics. In each of the colonies, a system of factional and familial loyalties and animosities formed the context within which particular disputes played themselves out. To cite the most famous example, the 1735 case of the New York printer John Peter Zenger was not an isolated attack on freedom of the press by a tyrannical royal government; Zenger was an ally of the Livingston-Alexander faction in opposition to the Delancey faction, which dominated New York's executive and judiciary. Another important illustration is the longstanding opposition pitting the Hutchinsons and Olivers against the Otises and their allies in Massachusetts. When one faction took the part of the Crown and the mother country, the other faction gravitated to the "popular" or "democratic" side. These patterns persisted through the Revolution and early national periods, eroding only under the assault of Jacksonian democracy in the 1820s and 1830s.

These distinctions in social rank were not ironclad -- for example, in 1706 Benjamin Franklin was born the youngest son of a "middling sort" printer in Boston; within forty years, on his retirement from the printing business, he had established himself as a gentleman in Philadelphia. Still, it would be almost inconceivable in the seventeenth-century colonial world, and extremely difficult in the eighteenth-century colonial world, for someone like Bill Clinton to aspire to high (or, indeed, any) political office.

• *Agricultural Society*: Most modern American students have had no direct exposure to the life of a farmer and thus no direct understanding of how an agricultural economy functions. Thus, we have to make certain that they realize how central agriculture, and the rhythms and constraints of farming, were to the lives of the colonists. Only a comparative handful of Americans in this period -- maybe five percent, as of 1787 -- lived in "cities" (that is, towns of

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[1]The New Netherland colony, although a product of the Dutch Republic, was too short-lived to be more than a fleeting exception to the generalizations in the text. Moreover, after 1664 it was an integral part of British North America, renamed for the Duke of York, who in 1685 became James II.

5,000 people or better). Virtually all Americans -- even ministers, doctors, and lawyers (the main "gentlemanly," nonfarming occupations of this period) -- got most or at least a major part of their income from farming. To the extent that it is ever possible for a family to be self-sufficient, many colonial American families were self-sufficient, visiting "towns" only for religious services, an occasional purchase of fabrics or manufactured imported goods, "court day" (to sue and be sued, or to listen to their neighbors suing and being sued), and political and social gossip.

• *Neighbors, Strangers, and Foes*: The British North American colonies coexisted uneasily with a remarkable range of neighbors. First, of course, there were the several Indian nations, whom the colonists sometimes esteemed as friends, sometimes valued as trading partners, and sometimes feared as savage enemies. Second, there were the rival colonies founded by other European nations -- the Spanish to the south and west, the French in Canada and the Ohio Valley, the Dutch and Swedes in the mid-Atlantic coastal region. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the colonies of British North America periodically lived in fear of their conquest or annihilation by the French and their Indian allies, and throughout this period the colonists and their British governors and military protectors labored to establish defensive alliances with friendly or neutral Indian nations. A vital point about this subject is that the colonial wars -- usually misnamed the "Indian wars" -- were almost always adjuncts to conflicts between the European powers in Europe. These "Indian wars" were actually the American front of "mini-world-wars" fought regularly for a century, and ending (finally) with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 (distinct from the Treaty of Paris of 1783 that ended the Revolutionary War).

• *The Marginality of the Colonial World*: Although modern Americans may view the colonial past as the central drama of the period, the colonists were seen at the time, and for the most part saw themselves, as marginal to the great drama of the period -- the struggle for pre-eminence in world affairs among Britain, France, and their European allies. Moreover, because the colonists were on the cultural margins of the Atlantic civilization, until the middle of the eighteenth century they tended to be regarded by inhabitants of the mother country as backward, parochial, and almost as savage (by cultivated metropolitan British standards) as the Indians who shared the continent with them.

II. THE DIVERSITY OF THE COLONIAL WORLD

The colonies of British North America were founded by different people and groups, at different times, and for different reasons. There was no "master plan" to create a large, organized political entity called British North America; it just evolved that way. This diversity was not just political, although there were several types of colonies; it was also religious, ethnic, and cultural. To be sure, the diversity of colonial life may look like various kinds of vanilla to a citizen of the United States, *circa* 1993, but it was considerable and remarkable in the view of any European visitor to the American colonies.

Political Diversity

The colonies fall into three broad categories:

• *Charter colonies* were organized either by groups of economic speculators and investors or by those seeking to found a polity where they could follow their own religious practices and beliefs. They were granted a document, called a charter, by the Crown; this document represented a partial and conditional grant of sovereign power over an area of North America (sometimes specified with precision, sometimes not) where the grantees could found a colony. (One of the reasons the Pilgrims entered into the Mayflower Compact was that they knew they had landed outside the territory specified in the charter they had been issued.) Charter colonies include Virginia and Massachusetts Bay.

• *Proprietary colonies* were organized by one powerful individual who received authority from the Crown to found and administer a colony; he and his descendants were known as "proprietors." Pennsylvania was the principal proprietary colony.

• *Crown colonies* were organized as direct possessions of the monarch -- although some of these colonies had charters as well. Sometimes they were founded from scratch (North Carolina); just as often, they were conquered territories that had been founded by another nation (New York, formerly Nieuw Netherland).

Ethnic/Religious Diversity

In his most recent work on immigration and demographic history, Bernard Bailyn has pointed out that even if the American Revolution had never taken place this period would be an extraordinarily important one, for it witnessed one of the greatest mass migrations of people in human history. He calls it "the peopling of British North America" -- a phrase, of course, that seemingly slights the presence of the Indians, though Bailyn's point is that these waves of European immigration dramatically increased the population density of North America and transformed the life of the continent.[2] Two types of diversity are especially important -- diversity of ethnic origins (among various types of Northern Europeans) and diversity of religious belief (mostly among varieties of Protestant Christianity, although Catholics and a smattering of Jews are present in the colonies from a very early period). Thus, for example, the Church of England, or Anglican Church (after independence, known in America as the Episcopal Church), dominated the southern colonies -- Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia. Although the Anglican Church was dominant in Maryland, it had to contend with a large and flourishing Roman Catholic population (as Maryland had been founded to provide a haven for English

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[2]Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Knopf, 1986); Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West* (New York: Knopf, 1986); Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers Within the Realm* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). *Strangers Within the Realm* presents able and challenging essays dealing with Indians, and with non-British European settlers within British North America.

Catholics). Pennsylvania, dominated by Quakers, was a hospitable home to those of practically every Christian denomination, and Philadelphia even boasted one of the few Jewish congregations (others were founded in New York City; Savannah, Georgia; and Newport, Rhode Island). New Jersey, again, was dominated by the Anglican Church but was also home to most Protestant Christian denominations. New York, which began as a Dutch colony, was a crazy-quilt of religious groups and loyalties, almost as diverse as Pennsylvania -- though the beleaguered Anglicans still sought to confirm their pride of place as the established church in the counties that made up what we would recognize as New York City. New York was more a sphere for forced religious diversity than a center of religious liberty. Rhode Island was the second great island of religious liberty, with Pennsylvania. The other New England colonies were dominated by various Calvinist denominations -- Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists -- in an uneasy truce with Anglicans; these denominations united only in resistance to Catholics, Baptists, and Quakers. (See section III below for a discussion of the legal and political aspects of the checkered religious geography of British North America.)

III. COLONIAL PROTOTYPES OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Two aspects of the colonial experience are notable because they appear to us to be prototypes of later political and constitutional doctrines that are critical to the course of American history. While we are right to acknowledge their significance and to note connections between them and their successors, we should not assume that the later developments were implicit in their colonial precursors, nor should we view these features of the colonial period through the lens of subsequent history.

• *Religious Liberty*: Although the old conventional wisdom has it that the religious dissenters came to America to seek religious liberty, the newer conventional wisdom notes, correctly, that the dissenters sought that liberty for themselves and were at times notably harsh on those who wanted religious liberty for views differing from those of the majority religious group. At the same time, some colonies (Rhode Island, New York, and Pennsylvania) practiced *religious toleration, under which* the majority chose to stay its hand rather than slapping down dissident minorities. Religious toleration was thus a very different thing from religious liberty, which recognizes the right to hold different opinions on religious questions.

It is still a matter of vigorous historical and jurisprudential dispute what an "established church" was in the colonial, Revolutionary, and early national periods. History, in this as in so many other cases, mingles uncomfortably with constitutional law because those who seek to interpret the religion clauses of the First Amendment often have recourse to the history of religion, and of religion's relationship with government, during the colonial, Revolutionary, and early national periods. For this reason, this issue requires somewhat extended treatment here.

Those -- the "nonpreferentialists" or "accommodationists" -- who oppose Thomas Jefferson's concept of a strict "wall of separation" between church and state maintain that an

established church could only be a single church, allied closely with the state, like the Church of England in Great Britain. They maintain that no such religious establishment ever existed in the American colonies, therefore that no "wall of separation" prohibits government aid to religion, and thus that government need not remain neutral as between religion and no religion -- only that the government may not pick and choose which religion it seeks to aid.

Their adversaries, the "separationists," maintain that there was such a thing as a "multiple establishment" -- a legal arrangement by which several different churches all received government tax moneys and official support -- and that those who sought to establish separation of church and state by adopting the First Amendment were aware of this situation and sought to prevent the federal government from reviving it on the national level.[3]

• *Intercolonial Union*: Although the colonies were not founded on any "master plan," and usually regarded one another with wariness and suspicion, pressures from outside often prompted efforts to forge intercolonial unions. In 1643, the New England Confederation was a notable success in coordinating colonial efforts in the seventeenth-century "Indian wars." But it broke up when Massachusetts Bay absorbed Plymouth and Connecticut swallowed New Haven. In 1685, the English sought to impose union from above and outside -- the Dominion of New England abrogated colonial charters, dissolved colonial legislatures, and created one unified administration for New England and New York. The colonists finally rebelled against the Dominion government, as the American counterpart to the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689. Finally, in 1754, delegates from most of the colonies, meeting in Albany, New York, crafted the Albany Plan of Union -- which, unfortunately, was rejected both by England (which resented its proposed cession of powers to an intercolonial government and legislature) and the individual colonies (which resented their loss of local sovereignty).[4]

* * * *

At the close of the Seven Years' War (or the French and Indian War), fewer British subjects were more loyal to the Crown and more proud to be Britons than the inhabitants of British North America. The colonists had fought side-by-side with British forces against the French and their Indian allies, and had contributed to a tremendous victory that reshaped the power balance of the Atlantic world. It was thus all the more stunning that, within five years,

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[3]The single best discussion of all these questions is Thomas J. Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[4]Harry M. Ward, *The United Colonies of New England, 1643-90* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961); Harry M. Ward, *"Unite or Die": Intercolony Relations, 1690-1763* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1973); Robert C. Newbold, *The Albany Congress and Plan of Union of 1754* (New York: Vantage Press, 1955).

divisions between the colonies and the mother country first erupted, inaugurating more than a decade of polemical argument and then popular violence that culminated in the first colonial revolution of modern times, and the first successful colonial revolution in history -- the subject of Essay IV.

ESSAY IV
WHAT WAS THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION? 1760-1836

INTRODUCTION: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

If, as is often said, history is the study of change over time, then the American Revolution is an ideal case study for historical understanding. The Revolution presents a wide range of issues having to do with the nature, causation, mechanisms, and extent of historical change. For example:

• Was the Revolution really a revolution? Or was it that historical oxymoron, a conservative revolution? What does the term "revolution" mean? And can we apply it to such diverse historical episodes as the American Revolution and the French Revolution?

• Are the arguments of those supporting or opposing the Revolution (and, a decade later, supporting or opposing the Constitution) accurate explanations of and justifications for why these men and women acted as they did, or are they rationalizations (conscious or unconscious) crafted after the fact?

• What place does intellectual context -- the structure of ideas and intellectual assumptions shared or debated by people in a given period -- have in history? How do we set a historical process such as the Revolution into its intellectual context?

• Who are the proper subjects of history -- the articulate, power-wielding minority or the inarticulate majority? The victors (those supporting the Revolution) or the losers (the British and the Loyalists)? And does it make sense to choose at all?

• Can we really know the "truth" of what happened in a major historical event or process such as the Revolution? (John Adams thought not -- and he was there.)

These issues are not just methodological preoccupations for modern educators. The Revolutionary generation understood questions of this sort very well, confronting them as the Revolution unfolded and, decades later, in pondering the Revolution's legacy. For example, the elderly John Adams kept up a lively correspondence on the question that forms the heart of this essay: *What was the American Revolution?* The question that perplexed and obsessed Adams still fascinates us, two centuries later, as he believed and expected it would.

To help our students understand it, we must think of the men and women of the Revolutionary generation as more than decorous refugees from a historical costume-party. Further, we and our students must think of the problems the Revolutionary generation confronted

in the ways that they did -- as terribly perplexing yet endlessly fascinating, time-bound yet timeless quandaries whose solutions were neither obvious nor fore-ordained.

I. ARGUMENT AND DRAMA, 1760-1775

The Revolution began as an argument over the meaning of the unwritten British constitution as applied to British North America. Rooted in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War between Britain and France, this dispute pitted colonial politicians and legal thinkers against British authorities and their apologists. The issue began as a pragmatic matter of costs: who should bear the massive burden of debt incurred by Great Britain in fighting and winning the war? To the British, it seemed self-evident: because the war, the last of a series of wars of empire, was fought largely to preserve British colonial possessions, the colonies should contribute their fair share to relieving wartime debt.

But, for several reasons, it was not so simple in the eyes of the American colonists. First, then as now, people hated new taxes. Second, the Americans disputed the authority of the British Parliament to tax them, enact laws for them, or do anything else to them. The Americans maintained that they were not represented in Parliament; therefore, Parliament could not act to bind free Englishmen residing in the American colonies. Only legislatures elected by the colonists and responsible to them could make laws for them and impose taxes on them.

The British regarded these claims as quaint at best, and dishonest at worst. They maintained that, because Parliament was required to legislate for the benefit of all English subjects wherever they might reside, the Americans were "virtually" represented in Parliament even though they could not elect members to the House of Commons. Because Parliament had supreme power to make laws for the Empire, the colonists could not challenge its authority. The colonists answered that, if Parliament acted without a check on its power, it was just as arbitrary and thus dangerous to liberty as the Stuart kings Charles I and James II had been.

This was the shape of the argument that began in 1765, with the Stamp Act and the colonists' Stamp Act Congress, and continued for ten years, through the Battles of Lexington and Concord and the convening of the Second Continental Congress. The colonists carried out the argument with the British government at two levels -- formal and informal. The formal level consisted of the declarations, resolutions, and petitions produced by town meetings, colonial legislatures, and intercolonial congresses. The informal level, just as important as the formal level, was a politics of ritual and demonstrations carried out by colonial radicals (for example, burning effigies, "riots" [which, as Americans conducted them, were actually peaceful demonstrations with only limited and ritualized violence], and the Boston Tea Party).

In this period, nobody thought of or admitted thinking of Independence (capitalized to denote a political concept). The years of argument and drama, however, inculcated among the American colonists the idea that they had much in common -- that they ought to see themselves

as one people with a common identity and a set of common interests overshadowing specific concerns. The arguments and rituals of revolution also set in motion the practice of building a national political framework and a national political community.

II. WAR AND INDEPENDENCE, 1775-1783

In the spring of 1775, the argument became a military conflict; within a year, it transformed itself into a war for American independence (lower-cased to denote a legal reality) and national identity. The intermittent gatherings of representatives from the colonies to protest British policy had become a Continental Congress, which took up the task of forging a national politics, a national ideology (articulated by Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine), a national diplomacy (pioneered by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay), and a national military (led by George Washington). All these were vital elements of creating an independent nation.

We see these elements coming together in the first great expression of the American mind -- the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson and revised and adopted on 4 July 1776 by the Second Continental Congress. The Declaration divides into two parts: the preamble, looking forward, stated the basic terms of American national identity and politics, whereas the body, looking backward, was the last word of the Americans in the long and frustrating constitutional controversy with the mother country.

This struggle for independence and liberty was a long and painful one, with no guarantees and no fore-ordained result. The war was a long, frustrating, and brutal struggle -- the longest war this nation ever fought until the Vietnam Conflict of 1963-1975. Many historians agree that Americans were forced in the early years of the war to adopt what we would call guerrilla tactics, breaking all the conventional rules of eighteenth-century warfare in order to survive and to maintain their identity as a people's army. Although most Americans believed that a citizen's army was consistent with the principles of liberty and self-government for which they fought, George Washington and his aides chafed at what they deemed the lack of professionalism among American soldiers. When aid from France began arriving in massive quantities, American military leaders put it to work in training a professional American army. The last great battle of the war -- Yorktown, in 1781 -- was a clash of professional armies, fought in a manner that would have seemed familiar to Marlborough in the early 1700s or Wellington in the early 1800s.

In 1776, the "smart money" was on Britain; most observers believed that British military might and naval power would be more than enough to shatter the colonists' spirit of resistance. Why didn't it turn out that way?

• The Americans (no longer colonists after 4 July 1776) had a cause (independence) to fight for and, even when that cause seemed remote, homes and families to defend.

• Even though they scored repeated victories over the disorganized, badly trained, and badly supplied Americans throughout the first years of the war (for example, New York and Brandywine, 1776) the difficulty of subduing a continent-wide revolution escaped the British, who also underestimated the Americans' military skill and commitment.

• By decisively defeating British General John Burgoyne's army at Saratoga, New York (1777), the Americans managed to prove to the French government that the American cause was worth a Franco-American alliance and a war with Britain. The resulting combination of American and French soldiers, resources, and planning proved to be too much for the overextended British forces.

• At the negotiations of 1782-1783, the American diplomats were a match for the best the British or the French had to offer. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay negotiated a valuable treaty of peace that recognized American independence from Britain and won land concessions from Britain to the new nation that doubled the size of the United States.

III. THE REVOLUTION AT HOME, 1775-1783

The Revolution was more than just a war for independence from Great Britain. It also was a struggle to define what the new nation would be by framing instruments and institutions of government, revising the laws of the individual states, and policing the loyalties of the American people.

First, the Americans wrote new state constitutions to replace their former colonial charters and to restore legitimate government deriving its authority from the people. They thus made major contributions to the theory and practice of constitution-making and democratic government. Some state constitutions deeply influenced the framing and adoption of the Constitution of the United States in 1787-1788 -- Virginia (the first written declaration of rights), New York (the first popularly elected executive, armed with a veto that could be overridden by a supermajority vote in the legislature), and Massachusetts (ideas of separation of powers and checks and balances, the constitutional convention as a method for framing constitutions, and popular ratification as a method for adopting constitutions).

Second, Americans revised their states' laws to purge them of vestiges of the colonial past, setting in motion currents of change that in the next century would transform American law and society. In Virginia, Thomas Jefferson led an effort to establish religious liberty by ending the "establishment" of the Church of England and recognizing liberty of conscience for all, and to reform the law of property by permitting greater freedom in the purchase, transfer, and bequeathing of land. He also tried without success to promote the education of the people by establishing public schools.

Third, by enforcing demands of loyalty to the Revolution, the Americans created the idea that one could choose one's citizenship and political loyalty. In the process of establishing loyalty oaths and tests of patriotism, the leaders of the Revolution also created categories of people -- both "King's Friends" and those who wanted to remain "on the fence" -- known to historians as Loyalists. The Revolution was as much a civil war as the Civil War of 1861-1865, dividing states, communities, and even families. As the war wore on, the Americans imposed stricter tests of loyalty, forcing even those who wanted to sit the war out to choose sides. In the process, they broke up families and violated individual rights. The lessons of the Loyalist experience were not lost on the Americans, however. Even as tens of thousands of Loyalists fled the United States at war's end for Britain, Canada, or the Caribbean, they left a legacy: stricter standards for defining and punishing the crime of treason that became bulwarks of American liberty.

Fourth, recent scholarship has established that the American Revolution was not merely an enterprise of white men. Women (on both sides) also took part, whether by collecting supplies and amassing money for the war effort, or by running farms and businesses so their fathers, husbands, and sons could fight, or by providing intelligence of enemy movements. Blacks, some of them freed or runaway slaves, also fought on both sides -- only to find themselves abandoned at war's end. Indians were drawn into the conflict, some siding with the British against the Americans (whom they resented for their efforts to push white settlement into Indian territory), others aiding the Americans and the French, still others caught between the contending forces and paying terribly for their bad luck.

It is still vigorously disputed just how the Revolution affected the social and economic conditions of the American people. In the 1920s, J. Franklin Jameson asserted that the American Revolution had to be understood as a social movement, and that it promoted widespread democratization in a variety of ways -- by removing legal restrictions on land ownership, by broadening the range of religious denominations and sects whose members could take part in public and private life as equals safe from discrimination, and by shattering colonial patterns of deference and elite authority. Although many historians have disputed particular elements of Jameson's thesis, the most recent study of this question, Gordon S. Wood's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, is a vigorous, learned, and historically sophisticated reformulation of the Jameson thesis -- even though Wood maintains that American democratization was a step that took place despite the expectations of the leaders of the Revolution, who wished to preserve an elitist politics of republican leaders benevolently guiding the "common sort." Wood's critics fault his work for discounting or overlooking continuing American social, political, and legal discrimination against African-Americans, Indians, and women; Wood responds that he rightly stresses the distinctive democratization of America by contrast with the rest of the Western world rather than judging the Americans of the Revolutionary generation by the standards of the 1990s.

IV. THE ORDEAL OF THE CONFEDERATION, 1781-1789

Popular memory jumps straight from Yorktown to the writing of the Constitution, or even to the inauguration of President George Washington. But the period between 1781 and 1789, which so often slips through our fingers, was vitally important in American history. It was the era of the Confederation -- more precisely, the era of the ordeal of the Confederation.

The Articles of Confederation, framed in 1777 by the Continental Congress and ratified by all thirteen states by 1781, was the first charter of government for the American republic. Its architects, terrified of the specter of a too-powerful centralized government, sought a balance between a government strong enough to preserve the "perpetual union" of the states and one too weak to injure the sovereignty (ultimate political authority) of the states or the rights of individual Americans. The quest for this balance engaged the Continental Congress for over a year, from June 1776 through November 1777; the results of their labors hung in limbo for nearly four more years -- until 1 March 1781, when Maryland, the last state to act, ratified the proposed charter.

Historians have subjected the Articles to unfair scorn and abuse. The Confederation Congress, the government authorized by the Articles, deserves credit for the winning of the war, the winning of the peace (the negotiation and adoption of the Treaty of Paris of 1783), and the administering of one of the greatest benefits of that peace -- the western territories acquired from Britain under that treaty. After all, the Confederation Congress established the principle that territories would be organized as states that would join the Union on an equal footing with the original thirteen. A nation of former colonies would have no colonies of its own.

But the Articles of Confederation *were* fatally defective as a form of government, and the difficulties the Confederation faced from 1783 to 1789 nearly shattered the nation. Because the Confederation had no power to raise revenue, it had to rely on contributions requested from state governments -- who could not be forced to pay up. The Confederation had no power to establish a uniform system of trade between states, or between the United States and foreign nations. The Confederation could not force the states to comply with the Treaty of Paris. And, because only an amendment adopted by all thirteen states could give the Confederation powers that it lacked, one state's stubbornness could -- and did -- frustrate the demands of the other twelve.

Responding to the challenges of this period, politicians of the 1780s who thought in national terms demonstrated a political creativity and courage rarely equaled in history. The struggle, first to repair the Articles, then to replace them with the Constitution, touched off the first great national political debate. It was the first time in human history that a free people had the opportunity to decide how they would govern themselves.

Beginning in 1780, nationally-minded politicians began to exchange letters and ideas, just as politicians of the 1760s and 1770s had done in pooling their ideas about resisting the British. A series of interstate conferences resulted in a movement that persuaded the Confederation

Congress (on 21 February 1787) to authorize the Federal Convention of 1787. After casting aside its mandate simply to propose amendments to the Articles, the Convention spent four months behind closed doors writing a revolutionary new charter of government: the Constitution of the United States.

Why was the Constitution so revolutionary? First, the new nation was the largest in the Western world except Russia, and the conventional wisdom of the time taught that no republican government could survive if extended over too large an area. It was for this reason, among others, that the Confederation had no power to operate directly on individual citizens. Second, for reasons of both political principle and pragmatic interest, state politicians preferred a weak and distant central government to an active and vigorous one having the power to coerce individual citizens. Third, the Constitution authorized a new, untried chief executive (the President) and a new, experimental federal judiciary -- features that the Confederation lacked, and that most Americans instinctively distrusted. Fourth, the Constitution created not only a new national government (though the Framers avoided even the word "national") but a national political community, one where the doings of New Yorkers could affect Virginians, and *vice versa.*

The Convention could not impose the finished Constitution on the nation. The Constitution therefore had to be debated and voted on in a complex political process that took place both within each state and as the first national political argument. The states held elections for special ratifying conventions, which then debated the Constitution in full view of the people. The existence and openness of that argument persuaded Americans to think of themselves as one united people, and laid the foundations for national politics under the Constitution.

Perhaps the most important issue of this period for historians is: Did the Constitution repudiate the democratizing influences of the Revolution (as Charles Beard, Merrill Jensen, and Gordon S. Wood have contended)? Or (as Richard B. Morris, Bernard Bailyn, and Richard B. Bernstein have maintained) was it actually the ideological and institutional fulfillment of the Revolution? Tied to this issue are such questions as: (1) Were the Articles of Confederation a failure? (2) Was the "crisis of 1787" a real crisis? (3) Who were truer to the principles of the Revolution, the Federalists of 1787-1788 or the Anti-Federalists?

There is room for vigorous debate on the "right" answers to these questions. As Gerald Graff has written in another context, "teaching the conflicts" is the best way to enable students to understand the extraordinary political challenges of 1787-1788, the solutions devised by the Federal Convention, the arguments between the Constitution's supporters and its opponents, and the importance of that continuing argument for posterity.

V. THE ORDEAL OF THE CONSTITUTION, 1789-1801

Even though the Federalists triumphed in 1787-1788, their victory was neither complete nor assured; the ordeal of the Constitution was only beginning. Anti-Federalists expected the Constitution to be amended, as they had demanded and as the Federalists had promised. What shape would amendments take? Who would put the new government into effect? What policies would the government pursue? How would it cope with issues of domestic debt, economic stagnation, and foreign policy?

The period from 1789 to 1801 posed two clusters of issues of substance and two clusters of issues of method:

Issues of *substance* included:

1. How should the federal government deal with problems posed by the crushing burden of federal debt from the Revolution? What, if anything, should the federal government do about state debts from the Revolution?

2. Should the government promote American economic growth? If so, what *kind* of economic growth?

3. What place should the United States have in the uncertain state of great-power politics on the world stage? Should the United States preserve its 1778 alliance with France, seek a rapprochement with Great Britain, or remain neutral?

Issues of *method* included:

1. How should we interpret the Constitution? Should we construe it broadly, to give the federal government extensive power to respond to national problems, or strictly, to guard against a federal tyranny and preserve state sovereignty and the rights of the people?

2. How should we conduct politics under the Constitution? Is it a risk worth taking to organize like-minded Americans into political parties which will contend for office and the control of public policy? Or would parties endanger liberty and the survival of the Constitution, leading to factional strife and anarchy or tyranny?

These issues of substance and method were closely linked. Positions on substantive issues required politicians to adopt specific positions on issues of method, and *vice versa*. For example, if you favored using federal power to encourage domestic manufacturing and commercial interests -- for example, by recognizing federal power to charter a national bank -- then you supported a broad reading of the Constitution and favored a vigorous federal government over state sovereignty. If you supported a strict reading of the Constitution, then you opposed vigorous federal policies on the economy, in particular federal creation of a national

bank. Similarly, if you supported commercial and industrial development at home, then you favored either neutrality in world affairs or closer ties with the world's greatest commercial and industrial power, Great Britain. If you opposed commercial and industrial development, then you supported aligning the United States with Great Britain's foe, France.

These issues sorted politicians into two loosely-organized groups or coalitions, which we recognize as the nation's first political parties, the Federalists and the Republicans.[1] (The term "political party" itself is fraught with confusion, as historians continue to battle when parties emerged and how, although without a clear or consistent definition of what a "political party" is. I propose, for our purposes, that we use the term to mean a group of like-minded politicians and voters, organized both within each state and across state lines, with a consistent platform or body of ideas and principles holding them together and stating their understanding of what government should and should not do. By this standard, neither the Federalists nor the Anti-Federalists were political parties, and the Federalists and Republicans of the 1790s were, however rudimentary they might appear to us and however much their members might have denied that they composed parties.)

The Americans of the Revolutionary generation feared parties as dangers to liberty and republican government. Seeing themselves as defenders of liberty and the republic, members of each group attacked their adversaries as dangerous to liberty and the republic. Thus, the politics of the 1790s were nasty and occasionally violent, elevating partisan conflict to unexpected levels of bitterness.

Three controversies marked out the course of political life from 1789 through 1801:

• in 1789-1791, the dispute over the constitutionality and the wisdom of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton's fiscal policies -- federal assumption of state debts, followed by creation of a national bank and federal policies supporting domestic manufactures;

• the disputes over whether to continue the 1778 alliance with France despite the Revolutionary French government's execution of Louis XVI, to restore relations with Britain (according to the controversial 1794 Jay Treaty), or to remain neutral in world politics (as President Washington counselled in his 1793 Neutrality Proclamation and in his 1797 Farewell Address); and

• the disputes over the growing differences between Federalists (led by Hamilton and John Adams) and Republicans (led by Jefferson, Madison, George Clinton, and Aaron Burr).

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[1]The Federalists of the 1790s differed from the Federalists of 1787-1788, just as the Republicans (1792-1824) differed from the Republicans (1856--). Teachers should make such distinctions clear to their students.

These issues boiled over into the national elections of 1796 and 1800, both for the Presidency and for Congress (House and Senate), with echoes in the state elections that occurred (though not with perfect synchronization) throughout the period as well. After George Washington's two terms as the nation's first President, the American people confronted a clear choice between Federalists and Republicans. Their decision in 1796 to endorse the Federalists led to the single term of President John Adams, during which partisan rivalry got even worse, leading Federalists to seek legislation empowering the government to silence its critics. The crisis of 1798-1800 abated only when the Federalists split between followers of Adams and supporters of Hamilton, creating a priceless opportunity for the Republicans.

Thomas Jefferson hailed his election (despite the embarrassment of the deadlock in the electoral college between himself and Aaron Burr) as "the revolution of 1800." He saw his victory as a confirmation of the American people's loyalty to the principles of 1776. Yet, ironically, even as they smarted and blamed one another in defeat, the Federalists deserved credit for the first peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another under the Constitution.

VI. AFTERWORD -- DEFINING THE LEGACY, 1776-1836

What was the American Revolution? This question obsessed the Revolutionary generation. The issue continued to perplex the politicians of the 1790s, and survived into the new century.

In the early nineteenth century, the aged survivors of the Revolution were pelted with letters and inquiries by the new nation's rising generations of the new nation, asking about the glorious days of the Revolution and the purposes for which it was fought. But the old men of the Revolution -- notably John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison -- would have pondered these questions without outside prompting, for as they anxiously watched the development of the nation they had helped to call into being, they struggled to decide whether their labors had been worthwhile.

The following extract, from the last letter that Thomas Jefferson ever wrote, sums up his views on the meaning of the Revolution, and it is the best note on which to end:

Monticello, June 24, 1826

> *. . . May [the American Revolution] be to the world what I believe it will be, to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all.) the Signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which Monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings & security of self government. That form which we have substituted restores the free*

right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of god. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves let the annual return of this day, forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them. . . .

ESSAY V
THE AMBIGUOUS DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA, 1800-1848

INTRODUCTION: DEMOCRACY FOR WHOM? THEMATIC AND METHODOLOGICAL FOCAL POINTS

In 1830, two Frenchmen visited the United States on a mission from their government; their formal assignment was to study and prepare a report on American prisons. One of them, Alexis de Tocqueville, had something else in mind; he seized the opportunity to conduct a detailed investigation of the new American democracy. Tocqueville confessed that, when he looked at the United States, he sought the image and the essence of democracy, a political and social condition of equality that, he believed, all European nations and societies were fast approaching. Foreigners often see a nation more clearly than residents do, and Tocqueville was the greatest exemplar of this fact: The product of his research and musings, *Democracy in America* (2 vols., 1835-1840), is perhaps the single best book on the United States written and an essential document of American history.

From today's perspective, the question is, "Democracy for whom?" Tocqueville agreed, for example, that America faced a serious and growing threat from the problematic relations among "the white, black, and red races" -- Europeans, African-Americans, and Indians. He also noted with disappointment that American women seemed to accept, and even to value, the submissive and passive role to which American men consigned them. Moreover, Tocqueville's picture of the United States in the 1830s does not present the diversity that later historians have found in the new nation, focusing so much as it does on the thought, words, and deeds of power-wielding white men.

As we consider this period of American history, we must remember that the political, constitutional, diplomatic, and military history we used to study as the whole of American history is only *part* of the history of the American people. These kinds of history, however, are still useful in shaping the chronological framework we want our students to absorb, and still vital as a core component of the history of a people whose national identity is, first and foremost, a matter of political choice.

The period 1800-1848 is well-suited to illustrate how complex, rich, and self-contradictory the materials of our nation's history are -- how, for example, in a period celebrated for its democracy, the political population excluded most free African-Americans from the political process; how women's roles in public and private life constricted; how racial and religious prejudices, and ethnic rivalries and hatreds, cast an ironic, bleak light on professions of expanded democracy.

I. JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRACY (1800-1824)

In this period, the rule of the "Virginia dynasty" (Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe) brought the triumph of the Republicans -- usually called the "Jeffersonian Republicans" to avoid confusion with the Republican Party that began in 1856 -- and spelled the end of the Federalist party. These twenty-four years are crowded with "great events": the disputed election of 1800, the "midnight judges" in 1801, *Marbury v. Madison* and the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the quelling of the Barbary Pirates and the Hamilton-Burr duel in 1804, the failed impeachment of Justice Samuel Chase in 1805, the Embargo in 1807, the War of 1812, the burning of Washington in 1814, the Battle of New Orleans and the Treaty of Ghent in 1815, *McCullough v. Maryland* in 1819, the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, and the disputed election of 1824 (which brought a major party realignment in its wake). But what are the great themes that might be obscured by too-relentless focus on "great events"?

First, by the election of 1800, the American people accepted political parties as the focus of national public life. But the repudiation of the Federalists in that election, exacerbated by their repeated political defeats and leading ultimately to their disintegration as a political party by 1816, suggested briefly that American public life would be dominated by one-party consensus politics. Ironically, the supposed consensus dominated by the Republicans shattered after only eight years.

Second, the Republicans tried to reduce the role of the federal government in public life, causing a corresponding rise in importance of state and local governments. To be sure, this goal was not achieved across the board, nor were the Republicans uniform in their commitment to it. One major exception was the Jefferson administration's frantic, sweeping, and largely unavailing series of attempts to enforce the Embargo of 1807; this measure produced "big government" of a kind barely imagined by Alexander Hamilton in his most theoretical musings, and not paralleled until the Civil War in 1861-1865 and the New Deal in the 1930s.

Third, both federal and state courts developed judicial review as a key component of constitutional government. In the hands of Chief Justice John Marshall, the last great Federalist in national politics (and a particularly painful thorn in Jefferson's side), judicial review was a powerful and flexible instrument with which to bring about national constitutional supremacy over the states.

Fourth, under Jefferson's leadership in his first term, the United States grew prosperous and maintained its peaceful relations with most of the rest of the world. Unfortunately, during his second term, the nation experienced severe economic difficulties tied to Jeffersonian foreign policy -- especially the Embargo.

Fifth, the nation's commercial and manufacturing strength in the North grew slowly yet steadily. Both in its economic success and in the development and spread of economic

dislocation and hardship for many working men and women, this growth helped spur the first stirrings of American labor in the direction of union organization.

Sixth, the revolutionizing of the cultivation of cotton in the South (due to Eli Whitney's cotton gin) dashed the hopes of enlightened Southern whites for the end of chattel slavery. The cotton gin helped to foster the expansion of slavery into the Deep South -- the so-called "cotton belt." Conditions in the Deep South exacerbated the brutality of slavery as a labor system -- while helping to entrench the interests of slaveowners as the central determinants of Southern politics in the states and the nation, and augmenting the power of the slavery interest in national politics.

Seventh, the nation decisively began to grow westward. The acquisition of the Louisiana Territory in 1803 only provided official government endorsement and backing for what for two generations (at least since 1765, when the British attempted to seal off the region beyond the Alleghenies) had been a powerful social, economic, and demographic reality. Americans knew that their destiny lay westward, and hurried to embrace it. Assuming (as generations of later scholars have done) that the westward regions were empty wildernesses waiting for settlement, instead of the homelands of Indian nations with fundamentally differing ideas about the use and ownership of land, white emigrants sought to build a new, rough-hewn America beyond the mountains and throughout what they deemed the West (and what we now call the Middle West).

Eighth, diverging economic bases of life in the North, South, and West gave new impetus to the enduring problem of sectional rivalry. These issues were complicated by the growth of disunionist sentiment. Pressures for disunion varied with the particular political crises confronting the nation. In 1798-1799, the seeds of disunion were planted by the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions in 1798-1799. The New England states' resistance to the War of 1812 and the potentially disunionist Hartford Convention of 1814-1815 shifted the focus of disunionism to New England. Disputes between free and slave states on a national scale brought the crisis of Union to the breaking point in the Missouri crisis that led to the Missouri Compromise of 1820.

Ninth, the United States began to make wary ventures into world politics. The classic question of the "problem readers" on this topic is, "Were these diplomatic initiatives naively idealistic, or soundly realistic?" There is no easy or consistent answer. Some of these initiatives were notably successful -- for example, the Louisiana Purchase and the quelling of the Barbary Pirates. Others were partly or wholly failures -- the most famous being the Jeffersonian attempt (1805-1809) to bring peace to Europe by denying the warring powers American trade, a failure that culminated in the War of 1812. Near the close of the Jeffersonian era, the foreign policy of President James Monroe's administration, guided by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, once more scored a notable triumph -- the closing of the American Hemisphere to European intervention to protect the new republics of Latin America from reconquest by the European powers. This was the *original* meaning of the Monroe Doctrine (1823).

Finally, although Jeffersonian Republicans celebrated the growing democracy of America, they still conceived of politics and governance as concerns reserved for the educated, well-bred elite; the great body of the people were relegated to the role of appreciative observers who, at election time, would reward virtuous and public-spirited officials with re-election. The next period of the nation's history would shatter these complacent assumptions.

II. JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY (1824-1840)

Beginning with the disputed presidential election of 1824, political dominance by the Revolutionary generation came to an end. The American people passed the torch to a generation of Americans who either experienced the Revolution as children or were born in the first years of independence. Moreover, the elitist republic of the Revolutionary generation was about to be supplanted by a new kind of polity -- the Jacksonian democracy, in which ordinary Americans (that is, ordinary white male Americans) would shoulder their way into political and economic power despite protests by social and political elites.

Even before Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., published his pathbreaking *The Age of Jackson* in 1945, but especially in the years after the Second World War, the Jacksonian era has been a favorite in textbooks as a proving-ground for historical interpretations. Historians have clashed repeatedly over such issues as: Was Andrew Jackson a democratic hero or a would-be tyrant? Were the Jacksonians backward-looking agrarians protesting against industrialization and centralization? Or were they defenders of democracy against entrenched special interests? Was Jacksonian democracy true democracy, or was it a democracy for white Protestant men only?

For example, even though state constitutional reforms of the 1820s and 1830s repealed property qualifications for voting and holding office, they imposed racial qualifications that disenfranchised African-Americans and preserved bars to women suffrage. Some states also experimented with laws abolishing or cutting back the old common-law doctrine of coverture, under which a married woman's legal identity and property merged with that of her husband; the successes of such states as New York in enacting Married Women's Property Acts in 1848 and later years only made more glaring the continuing refusal to deny women the vote and other political privileges and responsibilities.

The summary response to these questions is that, while the pendulum has swung decisively away from uncritical celebration of Andrew Jackson, his supporters, and his heirs, they are by no means the demonized villains that National Republicans such as John Quincy Adams thought them to be. Whatever historical consensus exists concedes some of the traditional Jacksonian virtues, such as resistance to concentrated economic power and social elites, but tempers those concessions by recognizing the Jacksonians' propensities for racist and ethnic bigotry, distrust of urban society and culture, and irresponsible economic policies.

Just as the nature of Jacksonian Democracy has been fertile ground for historical chair-throwing, so, too, the issues bound up in the question "Who opposed the Jacksonians?" have prompted vigorous historical disagreement: Were the Whigs -- the new party led by the great rivals, Senators Henry Clay of Kentucky and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts -- spokesmen for the monied, commercial, and manufacturing interests as opposed to the great body of the people? Or were they advocates of a strong, prosperous, united, democratic nation willing to use the power of the national government to achieve these desirable goals? Again, the emerging historical consensus seeks to achieve an even-handed synthesis of the best work of the Whigs' historical partisans and detractors, acknowledging both the public-spiritedness and public benefits of many elements of the Whig program *and* the economic and political self-interest that drove many Whig politicians, even the most eminent, and their supporters.

Other, more recent historians have asked an equally natural and important set of questions grouped around the inquiry, "If the Jacksonian Democrats were the winners, who were the losers?" Were the losers merely the "malefactors of great wealth"? While no consensus has emerged on this point, many of the best new historians of the Jacksonian period identify as losers:

• African-Americans, North and South, who became the victims of rampant racism and discrimination, both by law and in day-to-day life.

• Indians, both friendly and hostile. (The most notable victims in this category were, of course, the Cherokee people, who vainly attempted to demonstrate their civilization, their willingness to abide by the rule of law, and their entitlement to rights under law. But the government of Georgia, with the connivance of the Jackson administration, exiled them from their ancestral lands and drove them along the "Trail of Tears" to new "homelands" in Oklahoma.)

• Workingmen who found themselves victims of rapacious industrialists and promoters, and then of the severe economic slump of 1837, caused or sanctioned by Jacksonian economic policies.

Sectional tensions, and disputes between national and state sovereignty, continued and threatened to get worse in the Jacksonian era. In 1832-1833, South Carolina's defiance of the 1828 "Tariff of Abominations" revived and rubbed raw the bruised sentiments of disunion. As a complement to the exacerbation of sectional tensions and the growth of disunionist sentiment, in this period disunion in the South acquired intellectual champions, the foremost of whom was Senator (and, from 1825 through 1832, Vice President) John C. Calhoun of South Carolina.[1]

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[1]Calhoun, one of the most brilliant political thinkers the nation has yet produced, joined Clay and Webster as the "Great Triumvirate" ranged, for a variety of reasons, in opposition to Andrew Jackson.

President Jackson's uncompromising opposition to Southern arguments for nullification and threats of secession -- the one phase of his Presidency that has won him admiration from historians of all camps (except "Old South" apologists) -- further complicated the question whether the Jacksonians favored state sovereignty at the expense of national power, both for Jacksonians and their adversaries and for later students of the movement.

The Jacksonian years and the decades that followed were as significant for nonpolitical developments as for the Jacksonian political upheavals discussed above.

• Successive waves of immigration from Ireland, Germany, and Central Europe (in particular, the Austro-Hungarian Empire) inundated the United States, enriching the ethnic, religious, and social diversity of the American people -- yet encouraging nativism, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-immigrant hysteria.

• This period also produced the first stirrings of American imaginative literature, philosophy, and art of high quality, stimulated by (yet at the same time reacting to or even against) national pride and confidence. The twenty years or so beginning with the election of Andrew Jackson were the first stage of what historians have called the "American Renaissance," and the first flowering of a distinctively American culture.

1. In this period, writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne began to draw on the American past and present, rather than European models and traditions, as inspiration for a mature, truly American imaginative literature.

2. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau pioneered the crafting of one of the first truly American schools of philosophy -- transcendentalism, which emphasized the individual's direct personal experience of the world and his or her ability to transcend the limitations of ordinary existence.

3. American artists (such as the "Hudson River School" led by artists like Thomas Cole) demonstrated (a) that they could learn from and absorb the best that the arts of Europe had to offer, (b) that they could find artistic inspiration in the natural and artificial wonders of the New World, and (c) that the art these wonders inspired could stand up to the rigorous scrutiny of European taste.

4. This period fostered a renaissance of American scientific and technological advances -- improvement and widespread use of steam power, the invention and development of railroads, the growth of American industrial power and mass production, and so forth. Technological innovation and ingenuity -- which had been American characteristics since the days of Benjamin Franklin -- were now firmly ensconced as vital components of American culture.

5. American experiments in creating and expanding public schools, colleges, and universities bloomed in this period, making the "increase and diffusion of knowledge" a quintessential American phenomenon. (The phrase is from the will of James Smithson, the British scientist who bequeathed his estate to the United States and thus provided the nucleus of what became the Smithsonian Institution.)

• In the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, a wide array of reform movements -- abolitionism, temperance and prohibition, women's rights, labor unions, urban sanitation, utopian communities, religious revivalism -- took root across the land, prompting historians such as Henry Steele Commager to dub this period "the Era of Reform." This rash of reform movements was in part an expression of national pride -- specifically, to meet the challenge of making the United States as much of a beacon to the world as its leaders hoped it would be -- and in part a reaction by reformers against the smug complacency of many Americans who believed that the new nation already was a "new Jerusalem."

III. THE QUARRELSOME HEIRS OF JACKSON (1840-1848)

The defeat of President Martin Van Buren (Jackson's chosen successor) in 1840 did not mark the end of the Jacksonian era. Rather, Jackson's adversaries, the Whigs, tried to absorb and apply Jacksonian lessons and methods -- though with fragmentary and limited success. The Jacksonian model of the Presidency and the Jacksonian brand of national politics continued to dominate the nation through the 1840s, culminating in the nation's first aggressive war: the War with Mexico, 1846-1848.

The war ostensibly was an American response to a Mexican military violation of the border that left several American and Mexican soldiers dead and wounded. It had deeper roots, however -- chiefly in the huge, fertile, and rich region known as Texas. In the 1820s, many Americans chose to settle in Texas, which then was part of the Mexican Republic. By 1836, a growing movement for Texan independence from Mexico (either as an independent republic or as a new state in the United States) led to a bold but at first suicidal revolt. The Mexicans' quelling of Texans at the Alamo, in San Antonio, galvanized Texans' desire to throw off Mexican rule -- and Americans' support of their Texan neighbors. From 1836 to 1845, Texas was an independent republic allied with the United States. When, in 1845, Texas joined the Union as a large and powerful slaveholding state, Mexicans feared that their land-hungry neighbors would seek more pieces of the fragile Mexican Republic.

Similarly, though with less violence and more speed, American settlers in what is now California took advantage of the Mexican War to proclaim the independence of the California Republic (1848) -- which also, but more swiftly, joined the Union. (The land between the two former republics became the subject of the peace treaty that in 1848 ended the war).

The Mexican War was unique, perhaps even unprecedented, and Americans knew it. It was the first time (except, perhaps for the War of 1812), that Americans precipitated a war. It was the first time (again except, perhaps, for 1812) that the nation fought a war for motives of territorial gain. The war was a training-ground for young officers and soldiers who, fifteen years later, would form the nuclei of the Union and Confederate armies. Because of the dramatic speed of the American victories, the Mexican War helped also to frame for many Americans the idea (sadly mistaken, as they were to learn) that war was quick, simple, and glorious.

Proponents of the war cheered it on as a battle of Protestant democratic civilization against a corrupt Catholic quasi-tyranny. They also hailed it as the last great act in which the United States would achieve its "manifest destiny" of spanning the continent as a free and prosperous colossus among nations.

Opponents of the war -- and there were many, among them John Quincy Adams, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and the young Abraham Lincoln -- regarded it as a blatant, cold-blooded act of robbery by which a large, powerful nation set out to steal half the territory of a smaller, weaker, innocent neighbor. They also suspected -- though with less justice -- that the war was a proslavery conspiracy designed to secure territories where slavery could be planted and where enough slave states could be organized under the Missouri Compromise to tip the balance decisively in favor of the slave states.

The issues posed by the war and the controversy over its justification and its spoils did not evaporate with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Rather, they helped to frame the context of American public life for the next twenty years.

The land-hunger that drove the Mexican War and inspired the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo spurred American settlements and diplomatic saber-rattling elsewhere on the continent, most notably in the Pacific Northwest. Under the slogan, "54°40' [N. Latitude] or fight," American claims to that region -- not only present-day Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon but large parts of Canada -- led to a series of diplomatic clashes with Great Britain. But the British were far stronger than the Mexicans were, and diplomacy averted a full-scale war between the United States and Britain.

ESSAY VI
"NOW WE ARE ENGAGED IN A GREAT CIVIL WAR," 1848-1880

I. SOME BASIC THEMES: AN HISTORICAL SERMON

The era of the Civil War is the pivotal period of the nation's history. The Revolutionary generation first posed and -- they thought -- answered the question, "Are we to be a nation?"; the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian generations posed evolving answers to the corollary -- "What kind of nation are we to be?" But the generation of Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Frederick Douglass, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Stephen A. Douglas, Mary Chesnutt, and their compatriots were forced to reconsider what kind of nation the United States would be. By asking whether the United States could continue as one nation, the men and women of the 1860s had to confront the linked questions of what values resided at the core of the nation's identity, and what it meant to be an American.

This period is extraordinarily rich for the historian and the teacher of history. It has dramatic conflict; tales of heroism and sacrifice, cowardice and betrayal; and eloquence unmatched in the annals of any nation or people. It is also a perfect historical laboratory to examine central questions of understanding history:

- Does a great event, such as the Civil War, have an identifiable cause (or set of causes)?

- What is the place of "great men" (such as Lincoln or Lee) and what is the place of ordinary people in history?

- What place does politics play in history? Is it central, or is it just a preoccupation of those who have power, irrelevant to those who do not have it?

- What do such concepts as "freedom," "emancipation," "slavery," "federalism," and "equality" mean? Do they have one unchanging meaning over time, or do they change over time?

- Is war glorious, terrible, or both? What does it mean to go to war, to take part in war?

One methodological point: The terms "North" and "South" -- though both popular and seemingly useful to indicate opposition -- are misleading. Much of the so-called "North" was actually the middle and far West, and the South includes Texas, which is at the same time Western, Southern, and unique unto itself. It is far better to use the terms "Union" and "Confederate," *unless specific reference to a given region is needed.*

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PERIOD

How should we teach this period? What should students carry away from it? The following outline is offered as a chronological framework for exploring the issues of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

1. Prologue, 1619-1820. Issues of slavery and race, and issues of federal *versus* state authority are as old as the American nation. A preliminary backward glance makes good pedagogical sense -- to remind students when and where slavery came to the Americas, how Thomas Jefferson attempted (in his draft of the Declaration of Independence) to pin the blame for slavery on George III, how the Federal Convention confronted and evaded slavery in the writing of the Constitution, and how the issue simmered, just under the surface, until the Missouri crisis of 1819-1820. The Missouri Compromise revealed to the American people two things -- (1) that slavery would not just "go away," as the Founders had hoped, and (2) that slavery was the foremost of several key issues dividing the nation into sections and fostering sectional competition. The Missouri Compromise also sought to define zones of free states and slave states, postponing the ultimate resolution of the crisis.

2. Sectional Crisis, 1820-1850. The heirs of the Revolutionary generation -- the generation of Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster -- proved remarkably adroit at postponing issues of slavery and sectionalism, hoping that somehow either the problem would go away or that it would lose its urgency. At the same time, militants on both sides of the issue -- defenders of slavery as a positive good and advocates of immediate and complete abolition -- both played important roles in the controversy and helped to keep it alive. The 1850 Compromise repealed the 1820 line and sought to readjust the balance between free and slave states, again postponing an ultimate resolution.

3. The Impending Crisis, 1850-1861. Realizing that the issues dividing North from South, with the West as an uneasy third wheel, would not go away, and that the survival of the Union was increasingly at risk, the politicians of the 1850s sought to find an answer that would resolve the slavery issue and the increasing hostility between the sections. Three candidates presented themselves:

a. *Popular Sovereignty*, the invention of Democrats Lewis Cass of Michigan and Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, who threw the issue into the hands of the people of each would-be state. Proposed by Douglas as the core of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, this theory was discredited by the catastrophic strife -- a precursor of the Civil War itself -- that tore Kansas apart in the 1850s.

b. *Slavery as Property Right*, the brainchild of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney of Maryland, who declared a slaveowner's interest in his slaves to be like any other property right and denied African-Americans any status as citizens entitled to rights under the Constitution. Taney's goal was to elevate the issue to a nonpolitical, constitutional level and dispose of

it by an "authoritative" interpretation of the intent of the framers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Taney set forth his version of this theory in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), which has been reviled ever since, not only as the single worst decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, but also as an unintended catalyst of sectional strife that culminated in the Civil War.

c. "*Putting Slavery in the Course of Ultimate Extinction*" -- the position of moderate Republicans such as Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Lincoln insisted that he did not want to tamper with slavery where it had taken root, but wished to prevent its expansion (hoping that slavery would die out if it could not grow). He offered this position several times in the 1850s, most notably in his "House Divided" speech of 1858. In 1858, when Lincoln challenged Douglas's bid for re-election to the U.S. Senate, they searchingly discussed all three proposals throughout Illinois in the classic "Lincoln-Douglas Debates."

But the search for peaceful solutions to the contest between free states and slave states (or, perhaps, "solutions" that would delay the ultimate resolution of the issues) proved increasingly unavailing. The presidential election of 1860 posed the crisis, as the Democrats shattered into sectional fragments and the newly-organized Republicans (contesting only their second presidential election) captured the Presidency. Southern fears that Republicans would not hold to Lincoln's stated policy of limiting the spread of slavery and Southern demands for independent nationhood combined with Northern and Western skepticism about the seriousness of the secession threat to bring on the last and most calamitous sectional crisis.

4. And the War Came, 1861-1865. It is now a truism that the Civil War was a completely new kind of war: a war of societies and peoples, not just of armies; a war that fostered frantic development of technologies of communications, transportation, manufacturing, and (of course) killing. No longer was war merely a contest between armies, which bystanders could watch while eating picnic lunches. The Civil War was the first truly modern war, the conflict that taught the world about ideas of "the destructive war" and "unconditional surrender."

It was a war whose objectives evolved as the struggle evolved. For the Union, it began as a war to preserve the Union and the authority of the government in Washington. But it eventually became a war to destroy slavery, the foundation of the way of life that led the South to attempt to leave the Union. For the Confederacy, it began as a contest to establish the Southern states' right to leave the Union and to preserve their way of life; it evolved as a war of survival and a desperate defense against invasion.

The war reached into society in the Union and the Confederacy. It forced the people of both sides to face the horrors of war by showing them (through the photography of Mathew Brady and his collaborators) what war really looked like, and by the extraordinary carnage the war caused. It imposed privations, chiefly on the people of the Confederacy. It led to advances in ideas about sanitation, medicine, social services. It fostered a new, vigorous, and at times arrogant nationalism in the Union -- what Robert Penn Warren termed the "Treasury of Virtue"

that could excuse any national excess and forgive any national sin. By contrast, in the former Confederate states, defeat and surrender fostered among Southerners an ironical perspective on the glittering, successful American experiment -- what Warren called the "Great Alibi," excusing racism, discrimination, poverty, and corruption. (Warren's *The Legacy of the Civil War*, first written in 1961, remains the best short discussion of its subject.)

5. The Shape of the War, 1861-1865. This area of the subject, the strategy and tactics of the Civil War, long was a major field of American history. Even in our time, as the "new military history" (discussed in section 4 above) has established itself as a legitimate field of inquiry, there still remains good reason to understand the shape of the war as it evolved between Fort Sumter and Appomattox Courthouse. In part, this is because one of the greatest challenges facing President Lincoln was the conduct of the war -- how to secure victory and preserve the Union, and whom to put in charge of the war effort to achieve the Union's war aims. In part, this is because such questions of military wargaming have an abiding appeal for many students, and make up a useful way to coax them into direct involvement with historical material.

The shape of the war, as it evolved from 1861 to 1865, is relatively simple.

At the outset of the war, both Union and Confederate commanders believed in the old military adage: "To conquer the enemy, you conquer the enemy's capital." Consequently, both Union and Confederate forces lost many casualties and fought dozens of bloody, inconclusive battles over Washington, D.C., the Union capital, and Richmond, Virginia, the Confederate capital.[1] By the middle of the war (1862 and early 1863), some Confederate commanders -- notably James Longstreet -- advocated defensive war, by which Union forces would have to reconquer the seceded states, acre by bloody acre. By contrast, Union commanders such as Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman intended to make the war a full-scale struggle of peoples and resources; they proposed both to defeat Confederate armies in pitched conventional battles *and* to destroy Confederates' ability to make war. Union victories in July 1863 in Vicksburg, Mississippi (in the west) and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (in the east) indicated that the turning-point had been reached. From then on, the Union armies and commanders grew ever more confident that victory was only a matter of time and treasure. The battles of 1864 and 1865 were among the most horrific the world had yet seen, providing a grim foretaste of what people's war would look like should it ever break out on a global scale. These conflicts devastated the South, leaving wounds that would not heal for generations -- and that ambitious, selfish politicians sought to keep open for generations more.

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[1]Ironically, the first Union military commander, old and obese General Winfield Scott, proposed a strategy that closely resembled the strategy ultimately devised by Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. Scott offered what he called the "anaconda" strategy; the Union would blockade the Confederacy and sap its resources and its ability to make war, thereby forcing a Confederate surrender.

6. Emancipation, 1861-1865. We understand the freeing of the slaves best if we see it as a shared process. President Abraham Lincoln, of course, played a vital role. But Lincoln traced a complex path in working out what to do about slavery. He was conscious of the evil of slavery yet at the same time aware of its protected constitutional status; he did not want to take steps that would be moral victories but constitutional and legal nullities. Therefore, Lincoln framed his first moves against slavery as war measures, hoping to use the threat of emancipation to persuade Confederate states to cease their part in the rebellion. This is why the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) freed only slaves in the rebel states and left alone those in pro-Union border states and in conquered rebel territory. Lincoln also experimented with proposed constitutional amendments that would have established a system of gradual, compensated emancipation, whereby slaveowners would be paid for their loss of property at the same time that the slaves were freed. By 1865, however, he had decided that slavery had to be extirpated root and branch, and that the proper means was a constitutional amendment abolishing the institution completely. He hailed the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) as the cure for the evil of slavery, yet did not live to see either its adoption or its supplementing by other constitutional amendments.

But the freeing of the slaves was not simply the work of President Lincoln. The slaves did not stand idly by as the war was fought. They played critical -- even central -- roles in their own liberation, both before and after abolition and the destruction of slavery became central war aims for the Union. Freed slaves and free African-Americans for the first time were allowed to wear their country's uniform and bear arms in its cause, which truly became their own. Indeed, in many cases throughout the Confederacy, the slaves emancipated themselves without waiting for the assistance of Union armies.

7. Defining the Meaning of Victory -- Reconstruction, 1863-1877. Few areas of American historiography have seen as abrupt and complete shifts as Reconstruction. Its first historians vilified the period as a brutal ordeal for the hapless (white) South under the oppression of ignorant freedmen and rapacious "carpetbaggers" and "scalawags." One of the great heroes of the old view was Andrew Johnson; early historians depicted him as remaining faithful to Lincoln's generous plans for easygoing reconstruction -- and nearly losing his office for his pains. Not until the civil rights movement of the 1960s did historians begin to reconsider the actions and motives of the Radical Republicans and the freed slaves. Especially now, with the labors of the Freedmen and Southern Society Project at the University of Maryland, writing the history of Reconstruction has been transformed. Historians now depict Andrew Johnson as a stubborn, vindictive racist who probably deserved impeachment (though not in the manner that it actually happened). Historians interpret the Radicals as a well-meaning but deeply divided group of reformers -- some of them ardent believers in racial equality, others as racist as Johnson, still others cynical opportunists. Finally, most historians view Southern leaders not as noble victims of oppression but as racist oppressors who wanted to reestablish antebellum society in every respect except those outlawed by the Civil War Amendments to the Constitution.

Reconstruction was a period in which African-Americans showed that they could govern themselves and take part in public life alongside their former owners and oppressors. And yet

the critical factors in Reconstruction's short-lived success were not the Constitution's new amendments, nor the newly-enfranchised freedmen, not the nation's professed commitment to the principles of Union, victory, and equality. The sole effective guarantors of the success of Reconstruction were the Union occupation forces in the former Confederate states. And Reconstruction was about to be cut off with brutal abruptness.

In 1876, the Democrats apparently captured the Presidency. Most observers agreed that a Democratic victory would bring a swift end to Reconstruction. But the triumph of the Republican ticket brought the same result -- the withdrawal of Union occupation forces, the recapture of Southern states' governments and politics by former Confederates and Confederate sympathizers, and the abandonment of the freed slaves to the "tender mercies" of their former owners.

How did this happen? At first, it appeared that the Democrats had amassed a modest electoral majority. Republicans immediately charged that voting fraud in three Southern states had diverted nineteen electoral votes from the Republican to the Democratic ticket; shifting those nineteen votes would give the Republicans a one-vote margin of victory in the electoral college. In a murky and still-controversial series of investigations and deals, a special electoral commission composed of eight Republicans and seven Democrats awarded the disputed electoral votes to the Republicans. In 1955, C. Vann Woodward published a pathbreaking study, *Reunion and Reaction*, in which he offered the first close interpretation reconstructing the complex web of subterranean political and economic transactions that resulted in the Republican victory and the "Compromise of 1877." Several later historians have disputed many of Woodward's findings, and some have even denied that a sectional "Compromise of 1877" ever took place. Whatever the case, however, Union armies were withdrawn, and (as Eric Foner, the greatest historian of the period, has noted), Reconstruction remained "America's unfinished revolution."

ESSAY VII
"WHAT, THEN, IS THIS AMERICAN?" 1865-1900

Those who lived through the Civil War and Reconstruction recognized that the nation had passed through perhaps the single most significant transformative period in its history. The great questions of slavery, sectionalism, and national supremacy that had plagued the Americans for nearly eight decades had been resolved -- in part by force of arms, in part by constitutional and legal change made possible by military victory.

Most Americans concluded, with relief, that the unresolved quandaries of American national identity had been resolved. But, because history always has at least one surprise up its sleeve, most Americans were wrong, for this period posed new challenges to American values and assumptions.

Three intertwining themes define this period:

- *industrialization* -- the rise of the industrial economy and of accompanying issues of law, governance, and public policy;

- *urbanization* -- the dramatic growth of the nation's cities as focal points for population growth and demographic change, and as centers of commerce, culture, education, news, and politics; and

- *immigration* -- the effects on American identity, politics, and culture of the great waves of immigration from eastern, central, and southern Europe and from Asia.

The interaction of these themes added richness and complexity to late nineteenth-century American history.

I. THE RISE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

If the great issues were swept away by the Civil War, what remained for Americans to do? Idealists answered, "The Union victory has made it possible for millions of Americans to exercise their right to the pursuit of happiness." Cynics answered, "Get rich, and get rich quickly." Even in the years before and during the Civil War, the nation's growing mastery of technology had opened up vast possibilities for material success. The war dramatically confirmed that it was possible to run large enterprises (e.g., armies, transportation systems, manufacturing enterprises) on a national scale to fulfill national demand.

These new changes had two kinds of consequences for American life:

• The explosion of technological innovation of the late nineteenth century transformed the face of the American nation. The existence of national systems of transportation (railroads and steamship lines) and communication (telegraph systems, complemented and eventually surpassed by telephone networks) created a large, unified American economic system. They also shaped a new American culture, one that assimilated technological changes with increasing speed and complacency. Americans began to take for granted that their lives could be improved by such innovations as mass-produced, ready-made clothing; virtually or comparatively instantaneous communication spanning the continent or even the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; the rise of mass-produced newspapers, magazines, and books, and the resulting creation and dissemination of a national popular culture.

These technological changes also affected the lives of millions of ordinary Americans, by transforming the conditions of work and the range of available occupations. More and more Americans, faced with a choice between the always-uncertain life of farming and the prospect of more certain industrial employment, chose certainty and flocked to cities and towns to find work. Yet the conditions of industrial labor were often appalling, and at times life-threatening. Moreover, as the new industrial workers came to discover, they were unable to bargain over salary and working conditions on an equal footing with prospective employers. They discovered that their lot was to become cogs in a huge and ever-growing industrial machine, and more and more workers came to question just how wise their choice of work had been.

• American technological and industrial growth had other social and political consequences. With the development of the railroad, the steamship, the telegraph, and the telephone came the linking of the nation's raw materials, manufacturing centers, and markets. The recognition soon followed that a few well-positioned, shrewd, industrious men could build lucrative financial empires for themselves in the process of fulfilling this great national prospect. Similar realizations spurred the rise of such great manufacturing enterprises as United States Steel and Standard Oil.

These enterprises are often seen as the lengthened shadow of one man -- Andrew Carnegie, in the case of U.S. Steel, or John D. Rockefeller, in the case of Standard Oil. But, equally important, this period was the golden era of the large-scale business corporation. Although businessmen had experimented with corporations in earlier epochs, it was between 1865 and 1900 that the business corporation became the model for how a large private organization should be run. This was also the period in which the financial component of business -- providing the money to finance the development of new technologies, or the creation of new enterprises or the expansion of an existing corporation -- assumed overwhelming importance. The same models of large-scale organization that made it possible to create a manufacturing corporation or a railroad corporation to serve a national market also made it possible to create large-scale financial institutions that grew to wield immense economic power

in a national or even international scale. The late nineteenth century was thus the "Age of Capital."

The revolutions in corporate and financial organization also posed key challenges to law and government. Corporations are capable of wielding great power over their suppliers, their employees, and their customers. Investors, especially when represented by a large financial organization such as the House of Morgan, are at least as powerful as corporations. Indeed, unchecked power -- whether of large business corporations or of the wielders of capital -- seemed (to aghast reformers) to threaten the authority of government itself and the stability of American democratic society.

American workers realized that the individual worker was no match for the emerging economic world of large-scale corporate employers. They began, therefore, to consider how to organize themselves to meet the challenge posed by the employers' increasing economic power. To be sure, organized labor was nothing new in American history. The first lawsuits over employee organizations took place before 1810, and the 1842 Massachusetts case of *Commonwealth v. Hunt* protected workers' right to organize labor unions against the old common-law doctrine that forbade conspiracies in restraint of trade. But, throughout the nineteenth century, workers' organizations found themselves besieged by hostile forces -- both employers and government (sometimes local, often state, and on occasion federal). The Age of Capital was an age of bare-knuckled, no-holds-barred battles between management and labor -- the era of such great and terrible struggles as the "year of crisis" (1877), the Haymarket Riot of 1883, and the Homestead Steel Strike of 1892.

It might seem natural -- and many labor leaders believed it was natural -- that organized labor would become a valuable nongovernmental response (a countervailing force, in John Kenneth Galbraith's phrase) to the problem of corporate power. And, labor leaders hoped, the rise of an independent labor movement might induce government either to restrain the power of capitalist organizations (whether corporations or financial institutions) or to mediate between capital and labor. To some extent, their hopes were realized, as state and local governments experimented with legislation to protect the rights of workers (for example, state minimum-wage, maximum-hour, and working-conditions statutes) and the interests of consumers (for example, laws regulating railroad rates or the quality of manufactured products).

But federal and state courts were of two minds about the legitimacy and desirability of such measures -- and the legitimacy and desirability of an organized labor movement numbering those types of legislation among its goals. Many courts recognized such laws and programs as valid exercises of the state's police power -- the power of state governments to protect the health, safety, welfare, and morals of their citizens. But courts often suspected these statutes as violations of the freedom of contract protected by Article I, section 9 of the United States Constitution and of the due process rights of persons (including business corporations) under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.

Distrust of organized labor existed outside the court system -- indeed, within the larger structure of American society. Many Americans, from whatever social, ethnic, or religious origins, came to believe that the broad general equality of conditions that Tocqueville had examined and (guardedly) celebrated fifty years before had broken down, and that a class system was beginning to emerge, splitting Americans into three unequal camps: the wealthy few, the broad middle class (including professionals such as doctors and lawyers, and the independent small businessmen and tradesmen), and the working or laboring classes.

In the eyes of most Americans (who disdained to see themselves as workers), this newly-emergent stratification of American society seemed foreign, even threatening, to American values. It was easier for the wielder of capital such as Carnegie to portray himself (or to hire it done) as an exemplar of American upward mobility and success than it was for the organizers of labor to portray the labor movement as consistent with American values. If labor organizations recognized this stratification, they ran the risk of appearing to harbor "un-American" ideas about the inevitability of a rigid class system. If labor organizations argued for the need for worker solidarity, they ran the even greater risk of appearing to embrace "un-American" ideas about class struggle.

II. BECOMING A NATION OF CITIES

From the first settlements through the end of the Civil War, the United States was largely a rural, agricultural nation -- though Americans did notice that, in the decades preceding and during the Civil War, the nation's cities grew in pace with the growth of industry. After Appomattox, urbanization joined with industrialization to dominate the evolution of American society. The following quotation paints in arresting detail the explosive growth of American cities in this period:

> *By 1890 nine of every ten people in Rhode Island clustered in towns, and Massachusetts had a larger proportion of people in towns of 10,000 than any nation in Europe. One district of New York's Eleventh Ward, with a density of 986 per acre, was probably the most crowded spot on earth; even the notorious Koombarwara district of Bombay had but 760 persons per acre. In the twenty years from 1880 to 1900 the population of New York City increased from a little less than two to almost three and a half millions; Chicago grew from half a million to a million and a half, to become the second city in the nation; such cities as Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Columbus, Toledo, Omaha, and Atlanta more than doubled. In 1880 there were 19 cities with a population of 100,000 or more; by 1910, there were 50.*[1]

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[1]Samuel Eliot Morison, Henry Steele Commager, and William E. Leuchtenburg, *A Concise History of the American Republic*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 500.

This extraordinary growth was the result of several factors:

• First, the nation's cities grew because they became centers of industrialization -- a process that combined extensive urban construction and development with the consequent growing demand for factory workers, which in turn spurred the growth of home, apartment, and tenement construction.

• Second, the growth of technology and technological innovation made the rapid territorial expansion of American cities at first technologically feasible, and then socially and economically necessary. Such technological developments as the quick spread of electricity throughout the nation brought other, unexpected changes in their wake. The capacity to transmit electric power, or to construct relatively cheap, quick, and efficient transportation systems, reshaped the demographic portrait of the nation; it was possible for urban areas to expand dramatically into their formerly rural surroundings -- whether as a consequence of the building of railroads or streetcar lines, or of the stringing of electric transmission lines.

• Third, in a related though independent development, the nation's rural areas in this period entered an era of decline as sources of individual opportunity. Because of the growing cultural emphasis on cities as the place to make one's fortune, the nation witnessed a large and growing population shift from rural to urban areas.

• Fourth, the massive European immigration that was one of the key facts of this period (see III below) first inundated great cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

But the growth of cities ran head-on into a long-standing American prejudice against urbanization as somehow European, corrupting, and dangerous to democracy. Just as labor's response to industrialization seemed threatening to prized American values of individualism, free enterprise, and social mobility, so, too, did urbanization seem to endanger the individual's ability to own his own home, the cherished doctrine of self-reliance, and the prospect of democratic government.

But this anti-urban sentiment was only partly the latest outbreak of a venerable American intellectual tradition. It also was a direct response to the specific facts of American urban life, spread throughout the nation by the growing network of American newspapers and magazines. Americans throughout the nation read of the overcrowding of slums, the ghastly sanitary conditions that beset most urban areas, and the growing corruption of urban political life.

Finally, Americans' anti-urban sentiment was fed by prejudice against one of the principal reasons for urbanization -- the immigrants, mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe.

III. A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

Both Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy found it necessary to remind the American people that the United States is a nation of immigrants. Every person on the North and South American continents came from someplace else -- either as an immigrant herself or as a descendant of immigrants.[2] It is a telling and unfortunate commentary that we require regular reminders of these facts.

The late nineteenth century was one of the great ages of immigration in American history. This era of immigration differed from previous immigration booms in two key respects: scale and sources. In many ways, the change in sources of immigration was more important than the change in scale. By far the largest sources of immigrants in the period were the nations of central, eastern, and southern Europe. These immigrants were refugees from economic privation and political and religious persecution in the ailing empires of Austria-Hungary and Russia and the new, fragile nations of Italy and Germany.

This also was the first great period of Asian immigration to America, mostly from China but with a trickle of immigrants from Japan and Korea as well. However, anti-Asian feeling in the western United States, exacerbated by such cynical politicians as Daniel Kearny of California, limited both the extent of Asian immigration and the degree to which the Asian immigrants could take full advantage of the opportunities available to their white neighbors.

The growth of immigration in this period was spurred, as were so many other social phenomena, by technology. The development of ocean-going steamships and the rise of a great trans-oceanic trade spanning the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans made it possible for tens of thousands of men, women, and children to seek a new life in America and, despite the lure of the large eastern cities, to spread out across the continent to do so. Moreover, the rise of American industries and the growth of the railroad system created thousands of jobs -- both in factories and in the construction trades -- that offered powerful inducements to prospective immigrants seeking a new life.

Finally, because of the growth of urbanization and industrialization and the accompanying growth of American technology, the resources for understanding the immigration of the late nineteenth century are more varied and richer than for any other period of American history. For one thing, we have a wealth of first-person accounts of immigration and memoirs of immigrants; for another, we have the federal government's extensive statistical documentation of the waves of immigrants; for a third, we have a remarkably rich public and private photographic documentation of the arrivals and lives of American immigrants. All these resources make it

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[2]Of course, even American Indians are descendants of Asian ancestors who crossed the Bering land bridge tens of thousands of years ago. See Essay I.

possible for us, their descendants, to get at least some sense of what it must have been like to come to America.

Although immigration was one of the prime forces that shaped the American people, Americans always have been ambivalent about the virtues and advantages of immigration. Those who already have roots here have often resented those who sought to join them. In part, this was simply an expression of the fear that newcomers might not only outstrip those who were already here in achievement but even exclude them from the fruits of economic and social success. In part, anti-immigrant feeling is (and has been) closely linked to religious, ethnic, or racial prejudice. In few periods of American history (save, perhaps, the present) were these prejudices as evident as in the late nineteenth century. One way in which these prejudices found expression was the belief that the "new immigrants," coming as they did from despotic monarchies, were incapable of understanding democracy, living by it, or taking part in it. It was in partial response to these fears that the nation's public schools assumed the burden of training potential citizens as well as educating pupils. For millions of immigrant children, the public schools were the first real contact they had with America; the impulse to become "real Americans" became a driving force in immigrant families, and the process of what social scientists began to call "Americanization" worked in most families through school-age children upward.

The floods of immigrants that poured into the nation's largest cities (usually the seaports, such as New York, and rail centers, such as Chicago) swamped the cities' resources of housing and employment. In response to growing alarm at urban immigrants' living and working conditions, social reformers began to organize public and private relief programs and to pursue attempts to establish legal standards for housing and working conditions. These scattered reform efforts were among the seeds of a much larger, more comprehensive series of reform movements that soon came to dominate American life.

ESSAY VIII
WAVES OF REFORM, 1880-1921

This essay examines the two great waves of reform -- Populism and Progressivism -- that swept over American society and government in the years between the end of Reconstruction and the end of the First World War. It also examines the effects of domestic reform on the nation's place in the world, and *vice versa*. I have focused on the historiographical battlegrounds rather than on the details of laws enacted, cases decided, programs adopted, and agencies created.

I. THE CONTEXT

In the years following Reconstruction, as the forces of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration reshaped American society (see Essay VII), many Americans were disturbed by the social and economic changes that these forces brought in their wake. At the same time, many Americans distrusted demands for further sweeping reforms to curb the abuses of industry, the corruption of federal, state, and local governments, and the frightful living and working conditions experienced by the urban poor. The reflexive response of these Americans was to lump such demands for change with even more "threatening" demands for racial and sexual equality and socialism or even communism. The majority of white Americans (male and female) regularly cited these "extreme" demands as threats to the extant stable relations between men and women, parents and children, or families and the larger society. But even those Americans who were content to accept society as it was found themselves once more under siege in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and eventually they were forced to acknowledge what they long knew but could not bring themselves to admit -- that the new shape of American society was at least as threatening to the values they cherished as were the so-called extremists they feared.

II. WHO WERE THE POPULISTS?

The first great wave of reform is known as the Populist movement, from its heterogeneous advocates' insistence on the rights and interests of the great body of the people. Populism traced its roots to the farmers' Granger movements of the 1870s, which campaigned for regulation of interstate railroad shipping rates and other reforms to keep farmers from being overwhelmed by larger and more powerful economic forces. But the Populists had a broader agenda and a more insistent manner of advancing it.

Historians seeking to understand the Populists have split into two camps:

• The older approach, whose greatest advocate was Richard Hofstadter,[1] regards the Populist movement with suspicion and hostility. These historians emphasize the irrational parochialism of the Populists -- their distrust of immigration and cities, their virulent prejudice against Jews, Catholics, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans; their penchant for quick-fix schemes such as "free silver" (the demand for unlimited, inflationary coinage of silver to achieve the rate of $16 in silver for every gold dollar in circulation); and their tendency to view any large and complex economic or social development as a conspiracy by eastern money-men against the people as a whole. These historians occasionally concede that the Populists had a few good ideas -- such as women's suffrage, the direct election of Senators by the people, and a constitutional amendment authorizing a federal income tax -- and that their campaigns against monopoly power and the trusts had value in alerting the American people to the abuses of great economic actors in an unregulated economy. But, they conclude, these good ideas and sound policies had to await the rise of a new, more realistic reform movement -- the Progressives (section III below) -- who would salvage the good in Populism and put it into effect. The prize exhibit cited by these historians is William Jennings Bryan (Democrat-Nebraska); they trace a direct line from the Bryan who in the 1890s championed the interests of the common man and combatted the forces of reaction and centralized power to the Bryan who in the 1920s defended Tennessee's anti-evolution statute in the now-notorious Scopes trial.

• A newer approach to Populism accentuates the positive. The forerunner here was Norman Pollack, whose 1960 book *The Populist Response to Industriql America* was a slashing and often personally unfair attack on the Hofstadter view but which nonetheless compelled historians to rethink their understanding of the Populists.[2] While these historians concede that Populists occasionally harbored prejudice against immigrants, people of different races, and the cities, they point out that most of these prejudices were common throughout the "political population" (Henry Adams's phrase1 for those Americans who actually voted, held office, and were otherwise politically active). These historians insist on emphasizing the Populists' sound diagnosis of American ills, the merits of their attacks on moneyed interests and corrupt, unresponsive government, and the value of their proposed reforms. They even seek to rehabilitate the Populists' "free silver" campaign as an attack on the entrenched forces of the "money power." Finally, they maintain, whatever successes the Progressives achieved would have been impossible without the groundwork that the Populists laid.

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[1]Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955); Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1965).

[2]Norman Pollack, *The Populist Response to Industrial America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960).

• Modern historians such as Alan Dawley[3] adopt a stance between these extremes, recognizing the Populists' accomplishments and shortcomings in a more evenhanded manner than either the Hofstadter school (the case for the prosecution) or the Pollack school (the speech for the defense).

III. WHO WERE THE PROGRESSIVES? (ca. 1890s-1910s)

Even more energetic a sphere of historical controversy than that over the Populists is the historians' argument over the Progressive movement. The Progressives were a heterogeneous collection of reformers. Active chiefly in the nation's cities and the urban mass media (and in the legislatures of such states as Wisconsin and New York), the Progressives carried out efforts to reform American society and governance on all fronts. They numbered among their ranks social Progressives (such as Jane Addams, the founder of the Hull House settlement movement), economic Progressives (such as Richard Ely, the noted Wisconsin economist who emphasized the need to prevent great concentrations of economic power), legal Progressives (such as Louis D. Brandeis, the noted Massachusetts attorney and U.S. Supreme Court Justice, and his protege, Harvard Law School professor Felix Frankfurter), cultural Progressives (including novelists such as Frank Norris and Upton Sinclair and such muckraking journalists as Ida M. Tarbell), and of course the great Progressive politicians, themselves making up a remarkable spectrum of Progressive variations.

Occupying the poles of the Progressive political spectrum were Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, each of whom developed his own brand of political Progressive theory and policy.

• Roosevelt's New Nationalism emphasized giving a vigorous national government the power to regulate and mediate among large, clashing economic and social actors. "Mere bigness" was no sin if these powerful institutions and organizations could be brought into a stable, cooperative relationship with one another through the medium of government.

• Wilson's New Freedom emphasized using government power to knock the large economic and social forces down to size and keeping government, business, labor, and society at a human scale. Rather than concentrating on using the federal government to solve national problems, Wilsonian Progressives believed in using state and local governments as laboratories of reform. Recognizing the diversity of the American nation, they argued for the need to tailor government responses to problems to the specific political, social, and economic contexts in which they would have to operate.

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[3]Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991).

What held these heterogeneous and quarrelsome Progressives together as a movement was their shared perceptions, first, that the nation was in serious trouble and, second, that new thinking was desperately needed in order to craft responses to the nation's problems. This new thinking took various forms -- including the use of local, state, and national government to protect workers from unsafe working conditions, to guard consumers against unsafe products, and to bring order and system to the growing, ever more complex economic system. As noted above, however, a division emerged between nationalist Progressives led by Theodore Roosevelt, who conceived the nation as a fully integrated economic, social, and political unit requiring national solutions to national problems, and localist Progressives led by Woodrow Wilson and Louis D. Brandeis, who believed that mere bigness was itself a dangerous threat to American liberty, and that solutions to the problems of American life were best given effect by state and local government.

Progressives built on some of the ideas of the Populists, advocating greater democracy and accountability at all levels of government. Progressive initiatives and inventions in government included such devices as the referendum (by which the electorate would decide directly on major public questions), the initiative (by which the electorate could instruct their elected representatives to consider legislative measures), and the recall (by which the electorate could topple officials, for malfeasance or faithlessness to the interests of those they represented, before their terms of office were up). The Progressives also united to amend the Constitution to authorize Congress to levy an income tax (Amendment XVI, 1913), transferring the responsibility for funding the American government directly to the individual taxpaying citizen); to require that Senators be elected by the people of each state rather than by the legislature of each state (Amendment XVII, 1913); to empower the federal government to prohibit intoxicating liquors from interstate commerce (Amendment XVIII, 1919); and to require an end to discrimination against women's right to vote (Amendment XIX, 1920).

Yet another strand of Progressive thought focused on improving the mental, physical, cultural, and moral lot of the great body of Americans. Progressives favored expanding and reforming the nation's educational system, developing a "science" of eugenics to produce a genetically improved people, and teaching the citizenry to become moral, sober, and industrious by adopting and enforcing the Prohibition Amendment and legislation (the notorious Volstead Act) putting it into effect.

The historians' debate on Progressivism divides between "backward-looking" and "forward-looking" interpreters.[4] Richard Hofstadter, the founder and still the leading exponent of

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[4]A third group of historians spurns this debate, arguing that Progressive "reforms" were mere band-aids deceiving the people into believing that reforms had been adopted while leaving the great threats to the people largely undisturbed. See, e.g., Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (New York: Free Press, 1963).

the "backward-looking" school,[5] saw Progressives as middle-class Americans, small businessmen and tradesman and professionals, who yearned to restore the idealized America of their youth. Of course, Hofstadter noted in passing, this idealized America never existed, confronting the Progressives with a paradox rich in irony and poignancy. In trying to revive something that was, at best, an inspiring myth, they actually helped to transform the nature of American society, economy, and politics. By contrast, the "forward-looking" school, whose first great advocate was Robert H. Wiebe,[6] maintained that the Progressives confronted head-on the challenges of the emerging "modern" American economy and society. Wiebe's Progressives emphasized efficiency, predictability, and rationality in propounding their public policy and their critiques of society's ills.

IV. AMERICA AS IMPERIAL POWER AND INTERNATIONAL BEACON: THE UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD, 1890s-1921

While the Populist and Progressive waves of reform swept over domestic politics, the United States either was drawn into world politics (older historians' view) or aggressively asserted itself in world politics (in the newer, more critical historical interpretation). Whichever is the case, beginning in the 1890s and continuing with ever-increasing vigor and insistence, the United States established itself as a world power.

For the most part, the United States held itself aloof from major international disputes, except as they affected the Western Hemisphere. There, however, the nation conducted itself as a new, assertive, and vigorous power with imperial ambitions. Defining the Western Hemisphere to extend into the Pacific Ocean, Americans targeted such Pacific Islands as Hawaii and Guam as appropriate venues for American expansion and development. Between 1893 and 1898, an American-led coup toppled the independent Hawaiian constitutional monarchy and led to annexation of Hawaii by the United States. American pressure on the arteriosclerotic Spanish Empire culminated in the Spanish-American War -- a war sought and vigorously prosecuted by the United States against a hopelessly outclassed and overmatched adversary who did not want war in the first place. The American defeat of Spain in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines won for the United States an empire of its own -- though the United States permitted Cuba to go its way as an independent country. Further American exertions of power and influence won the independence of Panama from Colombia, followed by a coerced treaty between the United States and Panama that gave the United States territory on the Panamanian isthmus and, ultimately, the Panama Canal. The Panamanian episode was only the most flagrant of a series of American exercises of power and supervisory authority over the fragile, independent, and (ultimately) resentful republics of Latin America.

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[5]Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*.

[6]Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967).

The American imperial experience was a mixed one. Although the native residents of such American possessions as Puerto Rico and the Philippines were freer than they had been under Spanish rule, they nonetheless yearned to govern themselves and chafed at American rule (and its subdued though constant accompaniment, American racism). And yet most Americans looked upon the nation's democratic empire with complacency, believing, as the late President William McKinley believed, that God had dictated that the United States should rule these territories and civilize their peoples (though, again like McKinley, they probably did not know at first where these territories were.)

Beginning in the 1900s, the United States determined to expand its presence on the world scene beyond the confines of the Western Hemisphere and the Monroe Doctrine and play an active role in world affairs. President Theodore Roosevelt's vigorous mediation of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 (which won him the Nobel Peace Prize) sent this message to the rest of the world, and President Woodrow Wilson confirmed it in his evolving approach to the problems posed by the outbreak of the First World War and by the peace that would follow the war's end.

Wilson strove to keep the United States out of what he knew would be a destructive and futile European conflict. In 1916, he narrowly won re-election on the slogan, "He Kept Us Out of War." It was, at first, easy to keep the United States neutral; no American interests were directly implicated, except for American ships' right to travel the high seas unimpeded by European belligerents. However, in April 1917, that right was threatened when Germany announced its intentions to resume unrestricted submarine warfare. Wilson reluctantly acknowledged the need to commit the United States to a European war, and the decision marked a watershed in American foreign policy.

Wilson sought to define American war aims to preserve the moral high ground for the United States. In his notable "Fourteen Points" speech of 1918, he tried to articulate the war aims not just of his own nation, but for all the Allies. He declared that the United States sought no material rewards from the conflict, but rather that the nation hoped to lead the world into an era in which war would be unthinkable and impossible. Although the speech was welcomed at home and abroad, it did not become the international beacon that Wilson hoped or imagined it would.

The war effort had a wide range of consequences for American society. Just as had occurred during the Civil War more than half a century earlier, the nation drew on its remarkable technological and administrative ingenuity to coordinate the American war effort. American production and resource conservation demonstrated the capacity of government to grapple with huge problems on a national, even international scale -- and the administrator of war relief, Herbert Hoover, carried this work forward on a global scale, making both himself and the nation a beacon of hope to the peoples of the world. On a less cheerful note, the American people's response to war -- spurred by the nation's most sophisticated use of propaganda up to that time -- carried with it a vengeful and near-hysterical fear of the enemy, whether that enemy was defined as Germany and people of German descent or as people on the far left of the political spectrum. During the war, anti-German sentiment swept virtually the whole society (except the northern

Midwest, where Americans of German ancestry who had German sympathies were either a majority or too large and well-connected a minority to be intimidated into silence). At war's end, and during the negotiation of the peace, nervous government officials used the full powers of government in time of war to censor left-wing critics of the war, the peace, and American society. This power even extended to mass deportations of known or suspected radicals, often with no basis other than officials' fear of the deportees' views.

President Wilson's attempts to shape the peace in 1918-1919 were less successful, both abroad and at home, than his wartime leadership -- though it is a moot question whether these failures are traceable solely to Wilson's failing health and inability to compromise or to the larger problem whether the quest for a just world on American terms was an outbreak of American hubris. Some (including the President himself) saw Wilson's efforts abroad as the international counterpart of the Progressive reforms that had swept through American life at home. Others mocked Wilson as an egocentric, over-idealistic schoolmaster whose hopes were either naive dreams of a perfect world or the product of delusions of grandeur. In the negotiation of the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson was forced to give up point after point, accepting the tradition that victorious nations could strip defeated nations of spoils of all sorts, including monetary reparations and territorial concessions. Desperate to protect his brainchild, the League of Nations, from the old world-politics-as-usual of competitive rivalry among nation-states, Wilson felt that the League was the price of his own concessions on the war aims he had articulated so eloquently during the war.

The fight over the Treaty of Versailles was the single most turbulent treaty dispute in American domestic politics since the struggle, in 1795, over the Jay Treaty with Great Britain. Wilson now faced domestic-politics-as-usual, attempting to secure the ratification of a treaty that recognized a broader and more sweeping set of American responsibilities to the rest of the world than the majority of Americans were willing to accept. Most Americans, disappointed that their President had not succeeded in reshaping the arena of international politics, wanted nothing more than to turn their backs on the rest of the world and take shelter behind the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Republican politicians both resented Wilson's decision to exclude them from helping to negotiate the Treaty and were deeply suspicious of the Treaty's real and apparent inroads on American sovereignty (independent and ultimate political power); they fought the Treaty on that basis, rallying behind the Lodge Reservations prepared by Henry Cabot Lodge (Republican-Massachusetts), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The contest between supporters and opponents of the Treaty ended in a catastrophic defeat for the President, one that cost him his health and political authority. The United States was the only great power that refused to ratify the Treaty and remained outside the League of Nations.

In the 1920s, most Americans hoped, the world would go to hell as it saw fit, and the United States would watch or ignore the spectacle, as it saw fit. Nonetheless, the Americans' role in the war and the peace taught the rest of the world that American power and policies would, hereafter, be integral components of world politics, whether Americans wanted this state of affairs or not.

ESSAY IX
BOOM AND BUST, 1921-1933

I. LOOKING BEYOND TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

Many textbooks treat the Great Depression as a single entity, spanning the years from 1929 through American entry into the Second World War in 1941; they then divide the years of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in half, distinguishing the domestic era of the New Deal (1933-1940) from the era of the Second World War (1939-1945). I propose instead to break the Depression in two, using Roosevelt's election as the dividing point, treating the years of boom and bust (1921-1933) and the Roosevelt years (1933-1945) as distinct periods.

This approach seems to comport better with history as the American people experienced it. They saw the period from 1921 through 1929 as an organic whole (the "Roaring Twenties") and they saw the slide into the Great Depression from 1929 through 1933 as a grim, ironic coda to that period. The transition to the Roosevelt years marked an extraordinary change in the American people's basic thinking about government and the economy, and an equally remarkable change in morale from fear and despair to hope and confidence. It seems only fitting to make these points explicit in our periodization -- to enable students to understand the past the way those who lived through it did when that understanding makes good historical sense.

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The conventional understanding sees the period of boom and bust (also known as the Roaring Twenties) as a time when the American people went on a great spree, dismissing the problems of the nation and the world, and then began the slow, agonizing process of paying for the spree. This view is still valid, though containing as much caricature as accuracy. The traditional view minimizes the period's bleak side because it does not pay attention to groups that, for a wide range of reasons, did not get to go to the party:

• For example, African-Americans had little to celebrate in this period except for cultural movements, such as the Harlem Renaissance, that they launched themselves. The 1920s was the era in which lynchings in the South reached such a peak that even the white majority outside the South was forced to pay attention. Racial incidents, however, took place throughout the United States long before the 1920s -- for example, the New York City draft riots of 1863 and the catastrophic Detroit race riots of 1919. The racial violence of the 1920s thus was more of the same for its victims, however novel and appalling it may have seemed to white Americans who had no direct part in it.

• Labor had no reason to celebrate the 1920s either, for in this period management developed the fine art of using the labor injunction as a stinging weapon against strikes and labor disturbances. Nervous state officials also enacted and made energetic use of criminal laws punishing agitation for sweeping economic change as punishable advocacy of subversive doctrines.

• Immigrants watched, despairing, as the McCarran-Walter Act imposed strict quotas on immigration, favoring "established" ethnic groups (Northern Europeans such as the English, French, and Germans) at the expense of the "new immigrants" from Asia and from southern and eastern Europe. Those immigrants already in the United States, who made up the majority of the nation's unskilled industrial workers, bore the brunt of anti-labor actions by government and management. And anti-immigrant sentiment continued to be a powerful force in shaping the politics and political thinking of the period. For example, the 1928 defeat of Democrat Al Smith, the first Irish Catholic to win a major party's Presidential nomination, was powered largely by most Americans' prejudice against a candidate who had sprung from the new immigrant population.

• Even though women's suffrage was finally achieved in 1920, with the Nineteenth Amendment, this triumph left the women's movement confused and uncertain about its goals and its future strategies. Similarly, women found themselves losing many of the gains they had won of necessity during the First World War by entering the work force and forging careers for themselves.

The traditional view of the 1920s also neglects how the period's frantic atmosphere of binge and hedonism obscured other real and growing national problems, whether economic or social, and served as an all-encompassing excuse for government at all levels to turn its back on the responsibilities that government had assumed during the Progressive Era and the First World War. In particular, the federal government showed little, if any, interest in using its powers either to move directly against the nation's problems or to coordinate efforts by state and local governments to develop solutions to pressing problems.

Even developments and cultural phenomena often cited by textbooks as reasons to celebrate this period -- such as the flourishing of American literature, the rise of motion pictures and radio, and the individual achievements of Charles Lindbergh, Mary Pickford, and Babe Ruth -- had their bleak, pessimistic side:

• First, the one theme uniting the great literary figures of this period -- T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Willa Cather, Edna St. Vincent Millay, John Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway -- was disaffection from the prevailing values of American culture and a corresponding focus on the bankruptcy of mainstream American values.

• Second, the development of middle-class culture in America and its promotion in the new technologies of mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio, and film) deluded most

Americans into believing that everyone was middle-class, and that disparities of wealth either did not exist or did not matter.

• Third, the growth in America of a culture of celebrity used mass media to make public idols of baseball players such as Ruth, film stars such as Pickford, and other heroes such as Lindbergh. But these icons of celebrity distracted most Americans from the real and growing problems of their society -- or, as in the case of the head of the new Federal Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover, to lull Americans into the belief that the problems were being fought without inquiring into means.

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Teachers can draw many useful analogies between the 1920s and the 1980s, a period that many older students will remember without prompting. Issues of the use of governmental power to regulate individual morality, of the place of immigrants in American life, of women's rights and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities are all as lively and controversial today as they were then. Moreover, issues of the extent to which government should monitor and regulate the nation's economy and of the dangers of leaving large sectors of the economy in the "invisible hands" of market forces are also as significant now as they were then.

Students -- and most other Americans -- associate this period with two great phenomena that capture the imagination: Prohibition and the stock-market crash of 1929. Each is a valuable window into the central themes and characteristics of the period.

II. PROHIBITION AS A HALLMARK OF THE PERIOD

Prohibition plays a key role in the Roaring Twenties and the early years of the Depression. We tend to forget that Prohibition was not simply a project of intolerant "blue-noses." Rather, it was, at the same time, the quintessential Progressive social measure and the culmination of a social reform movement that had labored for the goal for decades (since the days of Andrew Jackson). To prohibit the sale or manufacture of liquor was an attempt to use law and governmental power on an unprecedented scale to modify individual behavior.

Advocates of Prohibition sought to justify the policy on a variety of grounds -- including efficiency, productivity, family values, and honesty in government and politics. Prohibitionists maintained, for example, that corrupt politicians held sway in the bars and saloons of the nation's cities, exchanging favors for votes, with impressionable and befuddled immigrants as their raw material and liquor as an effective lubricant of the process; and that drunkenness threatened the stability and happiness of the family and the productivity of the American worker.

The Eighteenth Amendment was adopted in 1919 and took effect in 1920, as did the Volstead Act, the enforcement legislation under which federal authorities operated. Historians

disagree how effectively Prohibition was or could have been enforced once it went into effect. For every cask of beer or liquor axed into kindling or spilled down sewers, perhaps two or three found their way to eager customers. At the same time, critics of Prohibition enforcement focused on what they deemed widespread, even blatant violations of civil liberties and individual rights. Prohibition received general lip-service in public -- and was defied or ignored in private. Violators of the Amendment and its enforcement legislation became heroes to the general public. Lawyers, judges, and scholars fretted that the gulf between theory and practice symbolized by Prohibition threatened the rule of law. Federal courts were inundated with thousands of cases growing out of the enforcement of Prohibition, including some, such as the wiretapping case *Olmstead v. United States* (1928), that were to have profound effects on such constitutional issues as the right of privacy.

At the beginning of the 1920s, Senator Morris Sheppard (Democrat-Florida) proclaimed, "There is as much chance of repealing the Eighteenth Amendment as there is for a hummingbird to fly to the planet Mars with the Washington Monument tied to its tail." By 1929, however, a countermovement for repeal was gathering strength, spurred by changing political conditions. These included the growing shift of the nation's population to the cities, where Prohibition had always been unpopular; general recognition that enforcement of Prohibition had become a ghastly failure; the evils of the speakeasy (and of the Amendment's creation of a nation of lawbreakers); and the Great Depression's highlighting of the severe economic impact of Prohibition. By the 1932 Presidential election, it appeared likely that a nationwide repeal movement could succeed, especially after the Democratic Party endorsed repeal in its national platform. Indeed, many historians maintain that the Democratic promise to work for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment was the cornerstone of Franklin D. Roosevelt's electoral landslide in 1932, rather than his pledge of "a new deal for the American people" to respond to the Depression. And the Democrats followed through on their pledge: In 1933, in near-record time for a constitutional amendment, the adoption of the Twenty-first Amendment, repealing the Eighteenth, ended the "noble experiment" of Prohibition.

III. THE STOCK-MARKET CRASH AS A HALLMARK OF THE PERIOD

The stock-market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that it touched off have become paradigms that have shaped all later generations' fears about economic downturns. Critics of the American economy as presently constituted trundle out the lessons of the 1929 crash whenever they perceive an analogy between it and modern economic crises. For example, opponents of deregulation of the savings and loan industry gleefully drew analogies between the S&Ls' catastrophic failure in the late 1980s and the 1929 crash that destroyed many American banks; opponents of computerized "programmed trading" made the obvious connection after the 1987 crash.

In many ways, these connections make good sense. The 1929 crash was not a sudden lightning bolt that destabilized a healthy economic system. Rather, it was a natural outgrowth of

economic trends and business practices that took a new and unstable system and made it ever more shaky until it collapsed of its own weight.

The 1920s were the great era of sweeping public faith in the self-regulated American economy. At the same time, the 1920s were the era that produced the great event that swept that faith into the wastebasket for half a century.

We need not rehash here the evils of buying stocks on margin, by which millions of Americans became speculators -- they built up vast personal indebtedness in the conviction that they could turn around, sell their stocks to even more greedy and gullible people, and thus recoup their paper investments. There were no government regulations restricting banks or other financial institutions from speculating on the market, and thus bankers and financiers went as mad as everybody else. Economists pleaded in vain with lawmakers and executive-branch officials to do something to restrain the orgy of speculation.

And yet, in a development just as important as speculation fever, the indifference of business and government to the plight of labor and the growing mismatch between production and consumption that that plight helped to exacerbate had something to do with the Crash. For it was all but impossible for the growing labor force, whose incomes were only creeping upward while corporate profits were spiraling ever faster into the air, to use their purchasing power to acquire the consumer goods they were busily producing. The same phenomenon was affecting the middle class as well, albeit to a lesser extent. Modern historians argue that this growing gap between what was being produced and what was being consumed helped make the Great Depression as sudden, severe, and durable as it turned out to be.

IV. COPING WITH THE GREAT DEPRESSION

As the nation slid from the dizzy heights of the summer of 1929 into the Great Depression, an economic slump that was not only national but international in scope, the American people tried desperately to understand what had gone wrong.

The lesson taught by the crash and the Great Depression was that the glorious dream of a self-regulating economy, free of government intervention and supervision, was moonshine. The businessman, so often lauded as the hero of the 1920s, became the scapegoat of the 1930s. As financial and industrial titans such as John Hay Whitney and the Swedish "Match King," Ivar Kreuger, either went bankrupt or went to jail or committed suicide, a newly cynical populace jeered the fall of those whom they had worshipped.

Americans also cast about for ways to solve the range of problems posed by the Depression. But another problem now confronted the nation: When the unemployment rate goes as high as 15 percent or higher, when tens of millions of workers have no jobs and upwards of one-third of the population suffers from want that they had no part in bringing on themselves,

what, if anything, should government do about such conditions? It was this political problem, and not the mere existence of the Depression as an economic fact, that destroyed the administration of Republican President Herbert Hoover and filled many Americans with doubt and fear about the nation's future.

In 1928, when he triumphantly defeated Al Smith, Hoover seemed profoundly different from his two Republican predecessors, Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Hoover had an international reputation as an engineer, a creative organizer of vast relief programs, and an administrator. If any President seemed qualified, even tailor-made, to address a great economic crisis, Hoover was.

Yet Hoover made two fatal mistakes: (1) he assumed that government need only join hands with the business community and permit them to carry the ball in reinvigorating the economy; and (2) he believed that, while government could use its power to encourage recovery, it could not and should not apply that power directly, lest it risk bringing a dictatorship in its wake. These assumptions, whether valid or invalid as a matter of economic reality, were a recipe for political suicide. Realizing these new truths, economists and legal theorists busily got to work proposing ways that government could use its power to prevent a similar economic catastrophe in future and hoping that a future President would draw on their ideas.

If Hoover was to be cast aside in 1932, who and what would take his place? The question facing the American people confronted other nations in this period; many nations, newly dubious of the virtues of political democracy, discarded it as a luxury that a depression-stricken people could no longer afford. At the same time that Hoover was preparing to turn over the Presidency to his successor, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany; other European and Asian nations either were moving in the direction of totalitarian dictatorships (Italy, Japan), convulsing in civil war (Spain), or desperately and unavailingly trying to repel foreign invasions (China). Even in the United States, rumors abounded of would-be dictators seeking drastic change.

On January 20, 1933, as she rode in the inauguration parade of her husband, First Lady-to-be Eleanor Roosevelt noted the expectant silence of the crowds lining the parade route. It frightened her, she confessed to her friends. And, though he did not show it, it frightened Franklin D. Roosevelt as well.

ESSAY X
THE AGE OF FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 1933-1945

Franklin D. Roosevelt was the most influential American President of the twentieth century. That he won four terms of office (and thus became the only American President to serve more than two terms) is, at the same time, a reason for that influence and a reflection of it. FDR presented himself as the synthesis not merely of the Progressivism of his predecessors Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson -- he claimed that his Administration's policies reconciled the enduring conflict between the great antagonists of American political thought, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. FDR proclaimed that his New Deal policies were designed to use Hamiltonian means to achieve Jeffersonian ends -- to use a vigorous, activist government to transform for the better the lives of ordinary Americans. No President except Lincoln has been so loved or so hated as Roosevelt. No President since Roosevelt has been able to escape his shadow; indeed, many of the most important Presidents of the past half-century (even Ronald Reagan) have proclaimed themselves admirers of Roosevelt.[1]

This essay focuses on the great historical epic that took place between March 4, 1933, and April 12, 1945. It stresses four subjects -- the nature of the New Deal(s), the crisis of political legitimacy precipitated in 1935-1937 by the contest between President Roosevelt and the United States Supreme Court, American participation in the Second World War (1941-1945), and the effects of the war on the American people.

In this period, American history was truly national in scope, bringing more of the American people together in exercises of national political activity and argument than ever before. The age of FDR fundamentally changed the direction of American politics and governance; it established models for identifying and dealing with national problems that still preoccupy the American people fifty years later. In many ways, the age of Franklin D. Roosevelt continues to this day.

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[1]William E. Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983; 2d ed., 1988).

I. THE TWO -- OR THREE? -- NEW DEALS

In his still-unfinished history of the Age of Roosevelt,[2] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has identified two distinct subsets within the set of government initiatives and programs usually referred to as the New Deal. Despite a flurry of criticism from older New Dealers who rejected this view (apparently on the belief that to concede a shift of gears would damage Roosevelt's historical reputation), most modern historians accept Schlesinger's argument.[3]

The first New Deal, the centerpiece of which was the National Recovery Administration (known as the Blue Eagle from its popular symbol, accompanied by the slogan "We Do Our Part"), was based on the idea that government would play an active role in the economy by joining forces with business and labor in a cooperative relationship. Its ultimate goal (to the extent that the pragmatic Roosevelt ever had an ultimate goal beyond restoring the political legitimacy of the government) was state-directed capitalist planning. The NRA set out to organize the national economy, industry by industry, enabling each organized sector of the economy to regulate wages and prices and competition on the theory that planning would prevent further economic instability and would promote the growth needed to end the Depression. This version of the New Deal, the brainchild of economists such as Raymond Moley and Rexford G. Tugwell, never achieved the goals its planners had for it; when in 1935 the Supreme Court invalidated the NRA, even Roosevelt secretly was glad to see it go. (The other half of the first New Deal was the set of economic programs designed to bring direct federal relief to individual Americans.)

The second New Deal took a different tack entirely. It was the invention of lawyers, proteges of Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and Louis D. Brandeis, under the leadership of Professor (later Justice) Felix Frankfurter of Harvard Law School. This New Deal emphasized Progressive-style reforms to eradicate the causes of the Depression -- a set of regulatory measures and government agencies that would police the securities and banking industries and the borders of legitimate economic activity. It also developed, albeit hesitantly and piecemeal, a federal labor policy that recognized the legitimacy of organized labor as a major component of the American economy. Indeed, the only fragment of the legislation creating the NRA that survived Supreme Court challenge became the core of the National Labor Relations Act, which organized labor has honored for sixty years as its "bill of rights." And, like the first New Deal,

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[2]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt, I: The Crisis of the Old Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt, II: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt, III: The Politics of Upheaval* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960). Schlesinger reportedly is at work on the fourth volume.

[3]See William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), still the best one-volume synthesis.

the second New Deal shifted American values and expectations by enshrining the idea of security for the individual American as a core element of the American political vision; the Social Security Act was the key measure in this context (as were the surviving direct relief programs from the first New Deal).

There was also a *third* New Deal that existed largely in the hopes and desires and imagination of the American people. Did the New Deal end the Depression, as many Americans came to believe after the fact? The answer is no -- if by the Great Depression we mean the want and unemployment and economic stagnation that tortured the American people from the end of the 1920s onward. That Great Depression was swept away at the onset of the 1940s by the surge of production first anticipating and then responding to the Second World War. But if by the Great Depression we mean something less quantifiable -- the atmosphere of fear and despair that gripped the nation when its economy imploded -- then the third New Deal, the New Deal as perceived by the American people in the 1930s, did end the Great Depression.

II. THE NEW DEAL VERSUS THE SUPREME COURT -- SEPARATING MYTH AND REALITY

Aside from the launching of the New Deal in 1933, the single most familiar New Deal story is that of the contest between the New Deal and the Nine Old Men. According to this story, the stodgy majority of the Supreme Court, held hostage by the doctrine of laissez faire, kept on shooting down New Deal legislation until, goaded beyond endurance and emboldened by his 1936 landslide majority, President Roosevelt challenged the Court directly. Roosevelt proposed that, because the Justices were elderly and tired and needed help, he would call for legislation permitting him to appoint new Justices to aid the incumbents with their work. His foes called the plan "Court-packing," and a titanic struggle ensued for the soul of the American Constitution. Finally, the Justices carried out an abrupt "switch in time" that took the steam out of the push to pack the Court. The story ends, as do many great American historical dramas, by giving everybody something. Roosevelt lost his plan but gained a more cooperative Court. The Justices saved the institution of the Court but gave in to Roosevelt and began to uphold New Deal measures. And the people got both a more cooperative Court and a renewed appreciation of their beloved Constitution.

Not quite. For one thing, the myth of the unflinching laissez faire Court is coming under fire. Professor Barry Cushman of St. Louis University Law School is completing a constitutional history of the New Deal; he rejects as overblown the traditional characterization of the Court as unflinchingly "laissez-faire" until the 1937 "switch in time" that defused the court-packing plan. For another, many of the New Deal measures that the Court struck down deserved to be struck down -- they were badly drafted, violating central constitutional principles, and the draftsmen knew or should have known what they were doing. Third, the so-called "switch in time" apparently was not a response to the Court-packing controversy; it represented two Justices' sincere belief that the specific law before them (the National Labor Relations Act) was free of

constitutional defect and thus different from the laws they previously had struck down. Cushman's analysis of the actual doctrinal history of the Supreme Court is persuasive, but, nonetheless, the "conventional" story of the battle between creative uses of government power and laissez faire constitutional theory shaped both American constitutional law and the American people's understanding of how that law has developed over time.

III. THE UNITED STATES AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

It was the burden of the Roosevelt Administration, as it has not been the burden of any subsequent Administration until that of Bill Clinton, that domestic programs competed *equally* with foreign policy for the President's attention. For most of Roosevelt's Presidency, the American people were so focused on national problems that they either had no time for international affairs or feared getting involved in a second world war that might bring in its wake effects as disastrous and disappointing as those of the First World War had been. Roosevelt, who had served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in Wilson's Cabinet and who had been the Democratic candidate for Vice President in 1920, was all too aware of the dangers of running ahead of the people's readiness to come to grips with foreign policy. Throughout the 1930s, as the foremost scholar of his foreign policy observes, he regularly engaged in "realistic calculation about what he could achieve at home and abroad" while preserving the traditional American role as a symbol of democracy for the rest of the world.

In 1939-1941, as war broke out in Europe, Roosevelt continued to move cautiously -- "to balance the country's desire to stay out of war against its contradictory impulse to assure the defeat of Nazi power." But, in the Pacific theatre, Roosevelt was more willing to act aggressively to contain Japanese ambitions for expansion -- in large part because he correctly perceived that the American people would endorse that policy. Unfortunately, for Roosevelt and for the nation, he miscalculated the ultimate Japanese ability and willingness to strike back against American pressure, and the result was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the first foreign attack on American territory in decades.

To what extent should the actual cut-and-thrust of the Second World War play a role in the curriculum, and at what levels? In the 1950s, 1960s, and even 1970s, it seemed relevant to emphasize such tactical and strategic issues as General Douglas MacArthur's "island-hopping" campaign in the Pacific War; the development of aircraft carriers and large-scale naval engagements in the Pacific; the development of submarine and antisubmarine warfare in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres of combat; and the development of the tank as a key factor in land warfare, and of strategic bombing as the single most important factor of the air war. In part, these emphases acknowledged the experiences of the fathers of the nation's schoolchildren and [illegible]ed teachers to draw on these experiences to supplement classroom work; in part, they grew [illegible] the need to understand the origins of the postwar world in the catastrophic damage the war brought throughout Europe and Asia; in part, they reflected the extraordinary impact of the war experience on the American nation, an impact also reflected in popular culture such as films (*The*

Longest Day) and television series (*Combat*); in part, they were outgrowths of persistent American fears of the prospect of a new ground war in Europe between the free world and the Warsaw Pact alliance.

At the intermediate and secondary levels, teaching the strategy, tactics, and military course of the war may well seize the interest of male students, and may be necessary to explain just why the Second World War had such a profound on two generations of Americans. In the 1990s, when the United States has its first President and Vice President born after the Second World War, the conflict has less immediacy than it once did. Nonetheless, the rebirth of ethnic conflict in Eastern and Central Europe, the general nervousness touched off by the reunion of East and West Germany, and the growing American apprehension of Japanese power (replaying almost exactly the fear, suspicion, and distrust of half a century ago) may well require at least a sketch of the general course of the war.

Another reason to examine the course of the Second World War is to address the Holocaust -- an event that, according to recent polling, 20 percent of American students and 22 percent of American adults believe possibly never happened.[4] The Holocaust is an event in American as well as in world history -- because the United States failed to act at many times during the war to prevent or retard it, because many Holocaust survivors finally found refuge in the United States, or because many other American citizens (whether Jewish or Catholic in religion, or descended from Slavic and Gypsy ethnic groups targeted for exploitation and extermination, or gay or lesbian in sexual orientation) lost family members to the Holocaust or would have been at risk themselves had they lived in regions conquered by Nazi Germany.

When American forces (ironically, Japanese-American and African-American units) liberated such camps as Dachau and Buchenwald, they could not believe the horrors that they had found, and therefore were instrumental in reporting the news of the death camps to the rest of the world. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander in Europe, ordered that local townspeople be forced to inspect the camps to confront the evidence of the crimes to which they had turned a blind eye, and the great CBS radio journalist Edward R. Murrow shocked the world with his eyewitness reporting of what he saw at Buchenwald. And the United States played a vital role in the organizing and conduct of the postwar War Crimes Trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo -- the first formal trials of individuals for "crimes against humanity," and a model for later attempts to punish those who commit acts of horror and brutality in wartime.

The Second World War was an unparalleled showcase for the best and the worst of which human nature is capable. For this reason, teaching the war as a war -- both the heroism and the horror -- has value beyond its specific relevance or irrelevance to modern problems.

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[4]See generally the important new book by Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), and the valuable review by Walter Reich in *The New York Times Book Review*, 11 July 1993.

Finally, the Second World War presents two key issues that preoccupy historians today:

• The decision to develop the atomic bomb and then to use it against Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- to develop the bomb, because it represented an epochal step in crafting the national-security partnership between government and the scientific community; to use it, because of the obvious moral issues such use raised.

• Roosevelt's policies toward the Soviet Union, which either secured the Allies vital support in defeating the Axis powers, or represented a catastrophic betrayal of the peoples of Eastern Europe and especially the Baltics, or both. Especially now, in light of the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these questions are ripe for discussion.

IV. THE WAR AT HOME

Wars have their effects on domestic concerns, whether social, political, economic, or cultural -- and the Second World War, the greatest war this nation has ever fought, is no exception. The Second World War continued and accelerated the transformation of American life begun by the various programs of the New Deal. For one thing; the explosion of war production effectively put an end to the privation and want of tens of millions of Americans. War industries were desperate for new workers, and Americans who either had been jobless or dependent on government "make-work" programs found new opportunity.

The war years also transformed American domestic life by drawing millions of American women into war industries and the work force. The legendary "Rosie the Riveter" symbolized the millions of women who either performed jobs abandoned by men who had been drafted into the armed forces or benefitted from the dramatic growth of war industries whose demand for labor outstripped the available supply of male workers. Except in times of crisis, most American men -- and even women -- could not accept that it was appropriate for women to work for wages in jobs traditionally reserved for men or understood as "man's work." However, the demands of the war economy, coming hard on the heels of the Depression and the New Deal, dramatically expanded society's understandings of what was appropriate for women in the American economy.

The war also brought a remarkable range of technological inventions in its wake. Radar made possible not only the conduct of aerial war on a global scale but the explosive growth of the international airline industry. Jet engines also revolutionized air travel, and rocket engines made possible both the ever-present threat of nuclear war between the 1950s and the 1990s and the space program of the decades following 1957. The war brought extraordinary improvements in the speed and reliability of airplanes and automobiles, transforming American ideas about the ease and desirability of cross-country or even international travel. The massive war production

of the 1940s was a dress rehearsal for the explosion of postwar prosperity and consumerism of the 1950s.

Moreover, the war had dramatic influences on millions of American servicemen and servicewomen, and on the tens of millions of Americans on the home front. Far more than the First World War, the experience of the Second World War taught Americans to think of themselves as part of the entire world, and of the United States as the most powerful nation in the world. The war taught Americans to think of events in Asia or Europe as having either direct or important indirect effects on their daily lives. It planted foreign policy at the heart of American politics for generations, and in the process put the Presidency (the institution of government best adapted to take the lead in issues of war, peace, and diplomacy) at the heart of American public life. Finally, the horrors perpetrated by the totalitarian dictatorships, given frank and brutal airing in the war-crimes trials of the late 1940s, gave the world terrifying lessons about the dangers of unconstrained political power, the menace of racial and religious bigotry, and the value of democratic government and individual liberty.

Even though the war ostensibly was a war to vindicate democracy and equality against the threat of totalitarianism, American practices of segregation and discrimination continued both in American society and within the war effort. For example, United States armed forces remained segregated by race throughout the Second World War (President Harry S Truman ordered them integrated during the Korean Conflict). Even after the end of the Second World War, the heroism of African-American soldiers, sailors, and pilots was largely ignored and obscured until the rediscovery of African-American history by the larger society during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s.

The single greatest violation of individual rights and constitutional equality in the war years, however, was suffered by Japanese-Americans and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry. Even before the Japanese Empire's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, American law barred resident Japanese aliens from becoming naturalized citizens, and many states enacted and enforced laws limiting where persons of Japanese ancestry could live, whether and how much real property they could own, and what jobs they could hold. Although persons of Japanese ancestry born in the United States were citizens by birth, they, too, suffered discrimination at the hands of their neighbors.

Pearl Harbor, however, sparked a virulent hysteria aimed at anyone of Japanese ancestry, even Japanese-Americans. In late 1941 and early 1942, many Americans in the western United States feared that their neighbors would aid Japanese forces in a feared invasion, and that many Japanese aliens and Japanese-Americans already were spies and saboteurs. *These fears were without foundation or reasonable basis.* But fears within the civilian population and suspicion within the American military fed one another; state politicians (including California's Attorney General, Earl Warren) demanded that the government monitor or even round up all persons of Japanese ancestry. In February 1942, the War Department persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 9066, under which the government forced more than 100,000

Japanese resident aliens and American citizens of Japanese ancestry living along the West Coast to abandon their homes, property, and businesses and accept forced relocation to concentration camps scattered throughout the nation.[5] These camps continued in existence through the end of the war.[6]

Despite the general public approval of Executive Order 9066 (fed in part by the media's unquestioning acceptance of the government's sanitized accounts of the origins of the internment camps and life within the camps), some internees resisted the government, claiming the protection of the Constitution. Four of them, including Fred Korematsu and Gordon Hirabayashi, took their cases to the United States Supreme Court. But the Court refused to strike down the internment, upholding Executive Order 9066 as a valid war measure; the Justices acted based in part on a record that contained severe falsifications of fact designed to persuade the Justices that the government had proof of the compelling need to protect the national security from the threatened treachery of some among the Japanese-American community. (The lies and fraud practiced on the Supreme Court by the War Department did not emerge until decades after the cases were decided.) Korematsu, Hirabayashi, and their co-plaintiffs had brought suit because they believed that the Constitution protected them as much as it did any other American citizen -- only to be told by the Supreme Court that they were wrong.

The Japanese internment is still the single greatest episode of violation of American civil liberties in the face of, and despite the plain meaning of, the Constitution.[7] Only in 1988 did the United States government render a formal apology to Korematsu, Hirabayashi, and their fellow internees and adopt a system for the payment of some reparations to the surviving internees. Even this limited redress, however, had to overcome opposition from American veterans of the Pacific War and groups actuated by prejudice against people of Japanese ancestry. The Japanese internment cases have never been overturned by the Supreme Court; they remain a troubling lesson to the nation that constitutional safeguards of individual rights are little more than parchment barriers if a majority of Americans is willing to tolerate the trampling of the rights of a minority.

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[5]Although the internment camps such as Manzanar were not death camps like Auschwitz or Dachau, they were concentration camps in the then-accepted definition of the term -- camps where the government could hold a given category of people in a concentrated area easily guarded and isolated from the rest of the nation.

[6]See generally Peter Irons, *Justice at War* (1983; rev. ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[7]This point is phrased this way to distinguish slavery (which had constitutional sanction to 1865 and which covered a vast array of individual and governmental actions) and the American treatment of American Indians (which arguably also had constitutional sanction and extended over generations of private and government actions).

ESSAY XI
"LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD," 1945-1975

I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON SUBSTANCE AND METHODOLOGY

This essay covers three decades -- from the development of the atomic bomb and the Allied victory in the Second World War, which catapulted the United States to a position of world leadership, to the collapse of South Vietnam, which cast grave doubt on the effectiveness and self-confidence of the United States as "leader of the free world." It also examines how, in the 1940s and 1950s, American society became a model of material and moral success for the rest of the world, only to confront, in the 1960s and 1970s, grave challenges to the bases of that success.

Throughout this period, for the first time in American history (other than when the nation was actually at war with a foreign power or powers), world affairs had direct, day-to-day impact on American politics, economic affairs, culture, and society. What factors helped bring about this vital change?

• *the development of nuclear weapons* -- perhaps the single best example in modern times of the shaping of history by technology.

• *the polarization of world politics between "the free world" and "the Communist world"* -- a development whose significance was heightened when both blocs developed and acquired nuclear weapons.

• *the breakup of the old European colonial empires, and the resulting competition between the superpowers for the new nations' support* -- a development complicated in turn by the rise of the non-aligned nations as a separate bloc (the "Third World").

• *the development of foreign aid and defense expenditures as major components of government spending, and the consequent growth of those sectors of the economy bound up with foreign aid and defense spending* -- developments that both increased the need for significant tax revenues from the individual American taxpayer and helped to make foreign and defense policy major and ever-present issues of direct concern to the electorate.

• *the changing relationship between foreign affairs and domestic politics* -- for example, in the 1950s, the perceived link between the Cold War as the focus of American foreign policy and threats (real or alleged) of domestic subversion designed to weaken the nation's posture abroad; in the 1960s, the links, both real and perceived, between the Vietnam Conflict and racial

and student unrest; in the 1970s, the links between the Middle East crisis and the domestic energy crisis.

• *the dramatic growth in power and status of the American Presidency* -- driven both by the invention of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons and by Presidents' recognition that they can seem to achieve more by concentrating on foreign policy rather than on domestic policy -- on the old view that "politics stops at the water's edge."

• *the linkages between issues of rights, equality, and democracy around the world and issues of rights, equality, and democracy at home* (e.g., the civil rights, women's rights, and gay rights movements).

• *the "shrinking" of the world by new technologies of transportation, communications, and war* (e.g., jet aircraft, missiles, satellites, electronic mass media, and nuclear and thermonuclear weapons) -- thus profoundly altering the previous effects of geography, economics, and cultural diversity on both America and the world.

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This period (and its sequel, covering the years since 1975) exerted the greatest direct influence on the understandings of history, politics, society, and culture shared by most teachers of history working today. It is also the period that, for our students, marks the beginning of "history" -- in large part because of the profusion of media images rooted in this era.[1] (Students often find pre-mass-media history so difficult to absorb precisely because of the lack of modern video images of such figures as the Revolutionary generation, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, and Frederick Douglass). Paradoxically, it is also the period with which students are, in some ways, least familiar. Teachers have tended to assume that, because *we* know it (having lived through it), *they* should know it. People now in their twenties who are beginning teaching careers often have been served poorly by their teachers, who never "got to" these years in survey courses due to the pressure of an ever-increasing amount of history to be covered in a rigidly-limited semester or academic year.

II. THE SHORT-LIVED "AMERICAN CENTURY," 1945-1963

The shape of the world after the conquest and reconstruction of the Axis powers left the United States, the only great Allied power not devastated by war, as the "leader of the free world" -- a phrase that truly came into use with the rupture of the Grand Alliance and the division of the world between the United States and its allies and the Union of Soviet Socialist

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[1]Note, for example, the popular video by Billy Joel, "We Didn't Start the Fire," which begins "history" in the years following Hiroshima and takes it up to the present.

Republics and its allies. American leadership of the "free world," confirmed by the nation's allies and (by implication) by its foremost adversary, the U.S.S.R., heightened the significance of any changes, for better or worse, in American life. If the nation abjured its former tolerance of racial segregation and race prejudice, for example, these decisions sent powerful messages to the great majority of the world's population living in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. If the nation's economy faltered, as it began to do in the late 1960s and continued to do throughout the 1970s, that, too, sent shockwaves through the global economy.

Thus the United States had to play a pivotal role in deciding, or helping to decide, or shaping the great foreign-policy and geopolitical issues of the postwar era. America's role as "leader of the free world" -- whether self-assumed or by default -- was a driving force behind the nation's foreign and defense policies: for example, Harry Truman's decisions to provide aid to war-torn Western Europe, to organize NATO, to carry out the Berlin Airlift, to recognize Israel, and to lead the United Nations effort in the Korean Conflict; Dwight Eisenhower's decisions to provide low-key support for South Vietnam, to oppose the Israeli-British-French war against Egypt, to send American forces to stabilize Lebanon, and to organize SEATO; and John F. Kennedy's decisions to go ahead with the Bay of Pigs operation against Castro's Cuba, to organize the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps, to initiate the "space race," to confront the U.S.S.R. in the Cuban missile crisis, and to move American support for South Vietnam from low-gear to high-gear.

The emergence of the United States as the leader of the free world also had its effects on the day-to-day lives of ordinary Americans. At the beginning of this period, the United States experienced a postwar boom of economic growth and a rise in the standard of living that was remarkable by any measure. This boom seemed to promise an era of prosperity without end; equally significant, it was an instrumental factor in the success of the United States in presenting itself as a model for the world of a just polity, a prosperous economic system, and a free and democratic society. That Americans saw their nation as a beacon to all other nations is a theme of American history dating back to the first English settlements in North America. But when in the late 1940s Henry Luce, the founder of Time-Life, hailed the decades after 1945 as the "American Century," he seemed to be speaking the exact, literal truth.

Simultaneous with the rise of a strong American industrial economy came the flowering of American science and technology. Although most Americans deemed the single greatest scientific and technological achievements of the era to be the development of nuclear weapons and the American space program, the widespread growth of electronic communications (telephones, radio, and television) and cheap and easy transportation (automobiles and airplanes) truly made America a united nation, an integrated national economy, and a technological model for the rest of the world. It was these inventions, and not nuclear weapons, that captured the imagination and the envy of the world. Further, these developments brought the world into American homes, via radio and television, with a directness and immediacy beyond anything the American people had yet experienced or (except for far-seeing science-fiction writers) imagined. As a result, world events had an ever-greater impact on Americans' lives and thinking, and

American events took place not just on a national but a world stage, transforming the world's image of the "leader of the free world" with ever-increasing swiftness and significance.

The combination of economic growth and prosperity with scientific and technological progress created an era of American life that established the myths and standards by which generations of Americans came to evaluate their own lives. The model household, in the eyes of most Americans, was the "nuclear family"[2] -- mother (homemaker) and father (breadwinner) and two children, with a house in the suburbs, two cars, and several happy pets.

The idealized locale of this idealized family, the suburbs, was another significant new development in American life. Not urban because of its quasi-rural setting and character, not rural because of its close ties to urban centers, suburbia became the "crabgrass frontier" (a term suggested by the historian Kenneth Jackson)[3] or the "new golden land" (a term adapted from Eastern European immigrants' ecstatic phrase for America) -- the perfect place for Americans to make homes for themselves and raise families. Suburbia was made possible by the postwar economic boom, which provided employment for millions of Americans, who thus could afford their own homes, and by the technological revolution, which made transportation and communication quick, safe, and easily affordable.

This "new golden land" soon found its way into the nation's mass media, specifically entertainment media such as films and television. Suburbia supplanted urban settings in popular movies and television programs, and the audiences who made the American entertainment industry one of the most important components of the burgeoning American economy also made suburban settings, modes of life, and values the measures of American material success and moral stature.

In retrospect, American material success was short-lived and both it and American moral stature came under vigorous attack and prolonged siege. Even during the brief "American Century," popular culture did not just present images of a peaceful, contented, exemplary suburbia. Novels such as Grace Metalious's *Peyton Place*, muckraking journalistic exposes such as Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* and *The Status Seekers*, and films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* shattered the conventional images of suburbia. These successful works "revealed" to public view a brittle, hypocritical suburban life whose placid surface concealed mindless conformity, self-destructive hedonism, bitter hostility between parents and children and between husbands and wives, marital infidelity, and desperate unhappiness. Writers who focused on the lives of American women demonstrated that the majority of women whom society

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[2]The term distinguishes the "nucleus" of a family from the older model of the extended family, with numerous grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other, more distant relatives as continuing factors in family life.

[3]Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

consigned to conventional roles of wife and mother were increasingly stultified by and discontented with these roles -- only to find that the larger society dismissed such feelings as "neurotic." Although largely ignored or trivialized at the time by the mass media, the discontents of suburbia presaged a societal and cultural upheaval that soon overtook American life as a whole.[4]

III. THE "AMERICAN CENTURY" SELF-DESTRUCTS, 1963-1975

The periodization adopted in this essay assigns the Presidency of John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) to the sub-period tracing the rise of the "American Century" -- thus making the Kennedy era the coda to the 1950s. Conventional accounts treat the Kennedy era as the opening act of the 1960s, an understandable approach for a variety of reasons -- including the case made by Kennedy himself that the 1960 election marked a decisive break with the Eisenhower era, and the inauguration of new government programs (such as the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress, and the space program), designed to move the nation decisively into a position to command the future -- albeit based on the values and goals of the present and the immediate past.

But the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies defy ordinary chronology; they do not match up with the conventional boundaries of decades. It can be argued just as persuasively that the Kennedy Presidency *was* the last act of the 1950s and that its sudden, violent end gave birth to the tumultuous Sixties, just as it can be argued that Richard Nixon's Presidency was the last act of the 1970s and its sudden, catastrophic end introduced the confused, drifting Seventies.

The Kennedy Presidency was the last during which the majority of the American people felt safe believing what their government told them. It was the last during which the social forces unleashed by the Civil Rights Movement sought to work within the "system," and, indeed, the last during which the "system" was not a word of opprobrium or reproach. It was the last during which the Cold War was an ever-persuasive justification for American foreign policies, and the last during which American Presidents could wield war powers without the hostile scrutiny of Congress and the electorate. Finally, and ironically, it was the last not to feel the corrosive effects of public reaction to the Vietnam Conflict -- in part because it was the first to carry out a massive increase in American commitment of resources and personnel to the cause of South Vietnam.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy changed all that. The first assassination of a President in over sixty years, it shattered the American people's faith in their government, in the honesty of their elected and appointed officials, and in the health of their society. If Kennedy had been murdered by a crazed lone gunman, then something was horribly wrong with a society

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[4]See generally David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Random House, 1993), for a highly suggestive anecdotal history and analysis of these and other cultural, political, and social forces.

that could produce someone who could commit such a crime. If Kennedy had been the victim of a conspiracy, then the entire system of law, order, and justice was horribly awry -- a threat to the nation rather than its principal instrument for protecting vital national interests.

The period immediately following the assassination -- the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) -- was dominated by the Vietnam Conflict. In the words of Tom Wicker of *The New York Times*, Johnson (whose hero and role model was Franklin D. Roosevelt) had wanted to become the greatest domestic President of the twentieth century, but instead "found an ugly little war that destroyed him."[5] But it was not only the mercurial Johnson whose grandiose hopes for America were shattered by Vietnam. Millions of ordinary Americans began to challenge a war that, however honorable its stated goals might be, increasingly was fought in a manner that was both repulsive (at times horrifying) and dismayingly ineffective. Also, Americans (especially in the African-American community) came increasingly to question a war that exacted disproportionate burdens on the poor and absorbed ever-more resources that could have been committed to solving the problems of the inner city and the rural poor. And, finally, Americans (including those who supported as well as those who opposed the war) began to see growing evidence that their government was lying to them about the costs, goals, and ultimate success of the war.

But Vietnam was not the sole agony of the American people in this period. After apparently hopeful beginnings, spurred both by victories in the courts and the enactment of powerful new Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, the quest for racial equality seemed to falter.[6] At the same time, increasingly militant leaders within the African-American community began to call for more direct action to secure rights and equality; some even began to advocate violence against what they deemed a repressive, racist society. The conflict of values and tactics within the African-American community and the "long, hot summers" it touched off in urban ghettoes throughout the nation alarmed the white majority, whose fear curdled into resentment and anger as the rhetoric of violence grew ever-more threatening.

The year 1968 is often remembered as the year America came apart. This pivotal year witnessed a confluence of independent yet related phenomena: (1) the culmination of years of racial unrest, (2) the peak of student protests against what they deemed to be an unjust society at home and an unjust war abroad, and (3) the reaction of many white Americans against what they saw as a sweeping challenge to cherished values and social stability.

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[5]Tom Wicker, *JFK and LBJ: The Impact of Personality upon Politics* (1969; new ed., Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993).

[6]The images we remember -- of "massive resistance" by Southern white politicians; of racist violence by white extremists against African-Americans who dared to claim and exercise their rights and whites, North and South, who tried to help them; and of the efforts of federal authorities to enforce the mandates of federal courts -- are from the period 1954-1965.

In the critical year 1968, as the atmosphere of threats, distrust, and violence poisoned the nation's politics and public life, the two leaders who might have been able to make a difference died at the hands of assassins. On 4 April 1968, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was slain in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had gone to lend his support to striking garbage-workers. Two months later, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was murdered just as he won the California primary for the Democratic presidential nomination. Controversial and polarizing in life, both men, as martyrs, became the focus of nearly universal mourning. The blows their murders dealt to the national psyche were catastrophic, and were only exacerbated by the urban violence that accompanied both major parties' political conventions that August.

The election, in a dispiriting and quarrelsome contest, of Republican Richard Nixon seemed to some to mark an end to the 1960s -- in large part because Nixon, as Eisenhower's Vice President, presented himself as a return to the "traditional" values and politics of the 1950s. (Walter Lippmann, the veteran political commentator, declared that he would vote for Nixon because the future seemed likely to require a politics of repression, and Nixon was the most suitable candidate to preside over repression.) Yet Nixon's Presidency turned out to be almost a fitting coda to the fractious, divisive, and frenetic Sixties. The President who pledged to end the Vietnam Conflict (much as Eisenhower had won his election by pledging an end to the Korean Conflict) expanded the war to include air operations of questionable legality in Laos and Cambodia. The President who pledged "to bring us together" was so concerned about domestic subversion that he used federal intelligence agencies to spy on and harass critics of his policies. And the President who pledged a "law and order" administration was, finally, driven from office because of his and his aides' flagrant violations of the Constitution and federal law.

If any single event confirmed the American people's growing belief that they could not trust their government, it was the Watergate scandal of 1972-1974 that began as a comic opera and ended in tragedy and crisis. Watergate dramatized the risks of the postwar Presidency in ways that the American people could not escape. In the wake of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and of the vesting of the power to use nuclear and thermonuclear weapons within the discretion of the President, the American people tended to defer to presidential power, to presidential claims of expansive and inherent executive authority, and to presidential judgments as to what foreign and defense ("national security") policies would best serve the national interest. The Watergate crisis showed how a President could camouflage massive and flagrant illegality behind the label of national security, and how difficult it was to mount a successful challenge to such claims.

Nixon's dramatic and highly public fall from power stunned the nation as no event had since the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The image of the disgraced President -- the first in American history to resign his office -- became a symbol of the period. Within eight months, however, another event definitively ended this period of American history. In April of 1975, the collapse of the South Vietnamese government revealed the hollowness of American policymakers' confident assurances about the wisdom and the effectiveness of American policy in Vietnam. Recalling Nixon's warnings that the fall of South Vietnam would reduce the United States to "a pitiful, helpless giant" on the world stage, Americans wondered what the future

course of American foreign policy should be (leading to what future commentators would call "Vietnam syndrome"). Just as Nixon's departure by helicopter from the nation's capital marked the end of this period at home, so, too, the liftoff from the roof of the American embassy in Saigon of the last, refugee-laden American helicopter marked the end of this period abroad.

IV. KEY HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTROVERSIES, 1945-1973

The great themes outlined above both shaped and were shaped by the key events of these three decades. The selective itemized survey that follows illustrates just how much history actually happened between 1945 and 1975, and suggests the lines of conflict that divide historians of this period.

A. The Origins of the Cold War: 1945-1954

The Cold War was both the focus of American foreign policy and a driving force shaping American public life at home. Thus, focus on the Cold War must address both the controversy over how the conflict between East and West originated, and the effects of that conflict at home:

• Historians who seek to interpret this period have espoused one of three views -- (1) Soviet aggression *versus* American containment ("old cold warriors"); (2) American imperial ambition for a "pax Americana" *versus* Soviet defensiveness ("revisionism"); and (3) mutual misunderstanding of each other's motives ("post-revisionism"). (It is not clear what effect the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the Warsaw Pact will have on the historiography of the Cold War.)

• The emergence of the United States as the leader of the "free world" in the Cold War lent new urgency to a fear that had first developed in domestic politics during the New Deal -- a fear of "internal subversion." Although at first those who wanted to combat internal subversion paid equal attention to threats from the extreme right (Nazism, Fascism, the Ku Klux Klan) and the extreme left (Communism), in the 1940s and 1950s the campaign against subversion focused on Communism. Was the hunt for "subversives" and "Communist sympathizers" sound self-protection, politicians' cynical manipulation of the paranoia of ordinary Americans, or an amalgam of both?

• Politicians and historians formerly painted American life during the Cold War era as the golden age of America. Recent scholars have offered a far bleaker view of a fear-ridden period during which Americans attempted to recapture a "golden age" that never existed, worried about threats of Communist subversion, and engaged in the world's greatest spending spree.

B. The Civil Rights and "Warren Court" Revolutions, 1945-1969

During and after the Second World War, a group of talented and determined attorneys determined to launch an all-out attack, in the American courts, on segregation. These lawyers, organized by Charles Hamilton Houston of Howard Law School and led by Thurgood Marshall, ultimately scored a dramatic triumph in 1954, when the Supreme Court handed down its

unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, striking down segregation in public schools as a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's clause requiring equal protection of the laws.

Legal battles against segregation and discrimination were the favored tactic of the "old guard" leaders of the civil rights movement. But newer leaders such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were dissatisfied by the slow pace of legal change and angered by the Southern white establishment's skill in throwing up legal roadblocks to the effectuation of *Brown* and its successor cases. They reshaped the quest for civil rights and African-American equality to number among its methods nonviolent civil disobedience, sit-ins, and freedom marches.

In turn, King and his colleagues (such as Reverend Ralph Abernethy and John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) faced further challenges from a younger generation of leaders such as Malcolm X of the Black Muslims, Stokley Carmichael (now Kwame Ture), and Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panthers, who had become impatient with nonviolence and sought either to confront the majority power structure directly or to pursue a separate black nationalist agenda. The growing militancy of younger leaders of the civil rights movement sparked growing white resistance to the goals of black equality. In addition, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other federal agencies, suspicious of alleged links between the civil rights movement and Communism, carried out surreptitious and illegal campaigns of harassment, disinformation, and entrapment designed to subvert and disrupt agitation for civil rights.

The civil rights movement's work in the courts touched off a wide-scale revolution in American constitutional theory and practice led by the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren. Beginning with *Brown v. Board of Education* and reverberating throughout constitutional law, the Court extended the protection of the Constitution to racial, religious, and ethnic minorities; to those facing the power of the criminal justice system; and to voters who suffered discrimination via malapportionment or restrictions on access to the polls based on racial prejudice. In so doing, Warren and his colleagues made the activism of the Supreme Court, and the nature of judicial review, pivotal contested issues of American public life.

C. "A Bright and Shining Moment?" The Era of John F. Kennedy 1960-1963

After a decade of mourning, historians began to brawl over the appropriate interpretation of Kennedy's Presidency. Was John Fitzgerald Kennedy truly a great President or the first master media manipulator ("more Profile than Courage")? A rigid "cold warrior" or a bold, imaginative architect of foreign policy? An advocate of liberalism at home or a hesitant leader who had to catch up with his fellow citizens? A creative strategist of presidential power or the first "imperial President"? The challenge historians face is to strike balances between these pairs of rigid opposites, each element of which has considerable validity, neither element of which is indisputably correct.

D. Vietnam, 1954-1975

The Vietnam Conflict may well have been the most divisive foreign war in American history,[7] and its goals and effects remain a focus for historical debate today. Was this war a selfless attempt by the free superpower to assure freedom to those struggling for it, or was it a quasi-imperialist aggression against Asian people struggling for self-determination, or something radically different from either, yet combining elements of both? Were the protests against the war merely selfish actions by comfortable students trying to avoid having to serve their country, passionate defenses of morality in foreign policy, or elements of both? What did the 1975 Communist (a combination of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces) triumph in Vietnam, and the Khmer Rouge Communist victory in Cambodia, portend -- not only for American foreign policy in Southeast Asia but for America's stature as leader of the free world?

E. The Great Society, 1964-1969

Although the Vietnam Conflict gutted Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs, the war should not obscure these major domestic policy measures (for example, the War on Poverty, Head Start, Model Cities, Urban Renewal). Historians have also begun to quarrel over the proper understanding of the Great Society. The poles of the debate are familiar: Were these programs laudable efforts to grapple with fundamental domestic problems, programs that scored a large measure of success? Or were they well-intentioned but disastrously expensive boondoggles, overmanaged from Washington, D.C., with little concern for their local effects -- programs which caused at least as much damage to the nation as they did good?

F. Richard Nixon, 1948-1974 -- Healer, Cynic, or Both?

Until 1968, most Americans saw Richard Nixon as a political has-been, a dour pre-McCarthy hunter of Communists. In 1968, however, Nixon won the Presidency by presenting himself as a healer of divisions. He demonstrated that he had greater ability to reinvent himself than any other modern politician. More than any other figure between the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his own resignation in 1974, Nixon was the pivotal postwar President. The architect of detente, he also was the President who ordered secret bombing raids on Laos and Cambodia and then invaded Cambodia. The architect of the conservative Republican "southern strategy," he also was the President who created the Environmental Protection Agency and signed the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Voting Rights Acts. The man who painted himself as a friend of "law and order," he broke the law and was forced to leave office in disgrace.

G. Watergate and the Fall of Nixon, 1972-1974

Just as the Nixon Administration fell, analysts of the Watergate crisis began to debate the significance of what President Gerald Ford called "our long national nightmare." Some insisted

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[7]But see Samuel Eliot Morison, Frederick Merk, and Frank Freidel, *Dissent in Three American Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) (essays on the War of 1812, the Mexican War of 1846-1848, and the Spanish-American War of 1898). The point in text, of course, does not consider the Civil War, which was not a foreign war.

that Watergate was the great secular "passion play" of the Constitution -- a towering constitutional drama in which the Constitution and the rule of law prevailed. Nixon's defenders, and later conservative scholars, charged that Watergate was the mask for a cynical campaign against a vulnerable President for doing nothing more than what his popular predecessors, JFK and FDR, had done (wiretapping of opponents, secret taping of Oval Office conversations, "dirty tricks" against political opponents) without anyone finding out about it at the time. Although inconclusive on its specific question, this debate has sparked valuable scholarship on the history of governmental abuses of power.

At the same time that the debate over the nature of Watergate began to rage, other scholars launched another, equally impassioned controversy: What effect would Watergate have on the future course of American public life? Would Americans be vigilant against future governmental abuses of power, or would they be dulled into passivity by a loss of faith in government as a whole?

ESSAY XII
A NATION IN QUANDARY, 1975--

In the eighteen years since the combined traumas of the falls of South Vietnam and Richard Nixon, the effects of these traumas combined with delayed effects of the assassinations of 1963 and 1968 to exacerbate American self-consciousness and to undermine American self-confidence.[1] Not only were Americans deeply uncertain about their nation's place in the world, or the continuing success of American economy and society at home -- they questioned some of the basic assumptions of modern American life.

A. That American government is both democratic and responsible
Americans began to perceive their government, at all levels, as dominated by professional politicians who had contempt for (and whose interests were hostile to) the great body of the people. Government seemed increasingly out of control, unresponsive, dishonest, corrupt, and unable to accomplish its objectives.

B. That America's problems can be solved by the application of governmental power
Americans' distrust of politicians and government officials grew dramatically in the years following 1975. Further, they came to believe that government efforts to solve social problems not only fail but often are worse than the disease. For these reasons, the electorate came to endorse the position stated most succinctly by Ronald Reagan, who in his first Inaugural Address (1981) declared that "government is not the solution to the problem. Government is the problem."

C. That America is a nation devoted to fostering greater equality for its people, despite differences in race, sex, ethnicity, religion, culture, or sexual orientation
The effort to realize the nation's commitment to equality at first continued in the late 1970s, as government developed affirmative action policies to provide remedies for past discrimination against members of minority groups. But more and more Americans viewed affirmative action as "reverse discrimination" favoring certain individuals based on race, and thus against other (white male) individuals based on race, even as the Supreme Court struggled to sort out which affirmative action policies were consistent with the Constitution and which were not.

On a different front in the battle for equality, the quest for equal rights for women began in muted form in the late 1960s and early 1970s, briefly dominated public attention in the 1970s, and then stalled, due to a variety of factors:

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[1]This essay is deeply indebted to Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), chap. 33.

1. Opponents of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment thwarted its progress through state legislatures and ultimately, in 1982, defeated it. This was a shattering setback for the cause of women's rights because ERA had swept through Congress with no trouble in 1972 and seemed destined for swift adoption. The case against ERA was only a specific application of a broader critique of feminism and the demand for equal rights for women. Grounded in "traditional" religious and moral values, understandings of the roles of men and women, and disapproval of changing sexual mores, the anti-feminist movement derived most of its support from fundamentalist religious groups and right-wing politicians and their supporters. The defeat of ERA, a profound setback for the women's movement, reverberated throughout American society, combining with the opposition to affirmative action to create a backlash against the use of law and government to remedy past injustices or to enforce equality under the Constitution.

2. The drive to extend the protection of the Constitution to the right of privacy, including the right of private decision-making in matters of sex and procreation, reached its constitutional high-water-mark in 1973, the year the Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade*, which extended the constitutional right of sexual privacy to cover a woman's choice whether or not to terminate her pregnancy by an abortion. (Although *Roe v. Wade* might seem more properly to belong in Unit XI, it became controversial only once the American people began to focus on it after the passing of the twin traumas of Watergate and Vietnam.) *Roe v. Wade* galvanized conservative and right-wing groups who maintained that abortion was murder, and rejected on that basis any possibility that a pregnant woman should have the right to choose whether to continue her pregnancy or not. The conflict over abortion grew beyond anything that pro-choice or pro-life factions expected, to become a dominant issue of American public life -- although one that, to this day, still has not achieved a definitive resolution one way or the other.

D. That America is a land where people of diverse races, religions, ethnic origins, and social classes can live together harmoniously and in peace

In some ways a consequence of point (C) above, the fragmentation of American society, culture, and politics -- which Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., dubbed "the disuniting of America"[2] -- is perhaps the most disturbing development of this period, for it challenged a fundamental assumption that had governed American life for nearly a century, since the waves of immigration from Europe gave rise to the model of America as a "melting pot" that distilled American citizens from human "raw material" drawn from throughout the globe. Beginning in the late 1970s, Americans instead saw themselves as divided from one another along precisely the lines of race, religion, class, and ethnicity that the "melting pot" ideology taught were irrelevant.

To be sure, the "melting pot" ideology that had dominated American thinking on immigration and cultural identity was vulnerable to sharp and justified criticism. It both embodied and symbolized pressure to conform to some hypothetical standard of "Americanization" -- pressure that caused many immigrants to abandon their cultural, religious,

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[2]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

and ethnic heritage; forget or scrap their native tongues; and change their names -- and even their appearances -- to win acceptance from the "majority." Moreover, those immigrants who did not jettison their entire cultural identity found themselves living double lives -- living as "Americans" in the world outside the home and in the culture of their birth within the home.

Nonetheless, despite its many flaws and the extensive human damage attributable to it, the idea of the "melting pot" did carry with it one valuable principle worth salvaging from the wreck -- that all Americans, of whatever race, creed, ethnicity, or culture, were of right citizens of the United States with a common political and constitutional heritage. The growing fragmentation of the American people endangers this principle, and this continuing challenge to the idea that Americans of whatever race, religion, ethnicity, or sex nonetheless have common interests *as Americans* in many ways is the most serious trial the nation faces.

The growing splintering of the American people into groups has fostered, in turn, a growing insistence by many of those groups on redefining the Americans' "shared" or "common" heritage. On the right are ranged advocates of "traditional" core curricula, which they claim are the only dependable backbone of a sound educational system. On the left are ranged advocates of "multicultural" curricula, which they argue redress the imbalance of "traditional" curricula in favor of dead white males of European descent. But this contest is also a battle over the values animating education -- "traditional" values (often closely linked to conservative and fundamentalist religion) *versus* an emphasis on diversity of religious beliefs and moral values and on a "realistic" approach to the kinds of values and behaviors that schools should foster in their students.

E. Still other interests and distinctions divide the American people as well

1. *The new immigration*: Census results in the 1980s and the 1990s confirm that the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States is the Hispanic-Americans, an umbrella term that includes people who can trace their ancestry to countries throughout Latin America (for example, Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico) as well as to Spain. Many of these Americans either are bilingual in Spanish and English or are fluent only in Spanish -- leading, on the one hand, to pressure to launch bilingual programs in schools and government and, on the other, to demands that English receive legal or even constitutional sanction as the official language of the United States. (Just as many Hispanic-Americans either are so totally assimilated that they refuse to speak Spanish, or are the children of assimilated parents who refused to teach them Spanish at home.) Asian-Americans of all sorts (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, Pakistani) rank just behind Hispanic Americans as a fast-growing force in American life. This demographic development is especially significant because many Asian-Americans have brought with them their own religions (such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto) -- faiths profoundly different from the Judeo-Christian tradition that helped to shape most of the nation's history. Among other things, the growth of these segments of the nation's population indicates that those of European descent

may well become a minority not only among American immigrants, but of the American population.

2. *The aging of America*: Census results also confirm that, as the massive bulge in the population representing the so-called "baby boom" (those Americans born between 1946 and 1962) ages, more and more Americans will be dependent on the Social Security system, which will be funded by taxes paid by fewer and fewer Americans -- members of the "baby bust" (those born in the 1960s and early 1970s) and the "second baby boom" (children of the "baby boom" generation, born in the late 1970s and 1980s). Not only will this major age shift affect the Social Security system; it also will pose important challenges to the nation's public and private systems for providing and paying for health care.

3. *The health care crisis*: The national crisis over affordable and available health care goes beyond concerns derived from the aging of America. The sheer expense of health costs and the alarming growth in the number of Americans lacking even basic health insurance have surfaced periodically in debates over American health policy. For more than three decades, the growing recognition of cancer as a major killer of Americans has spurred efforts to find a cure -- with only partial success and an uncertain future. Still another issue that drives public debate about health care is the spread of AIDS, a sexually-transmitted disease that, to date, is invariably fatal and at this writing has no cure.

4. *The environmental crisis*: The plight of the environment was first brought to public attention in the early 1960s by Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring* (1962); it first captured widespread interest in 1970, with the first "Earth Day." Although the modern environmental movement tapped into a long and honorable tradition of "stewardship" thinking about the environment (going back to the Progressive era's Ballinger-Pinchot controversy), it scored its principal successes in the 1970s, with the adoption of environmental legislation and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. It also set out, with less success, to educate Americans about their nation's status as the world's leading consumer of natural resources and raw materials and to encourage conservation, recycling, and a less expansive way of life. In the 1980s, however, environmentalism came under sustained attack, on a variety of grounds, from the right wing of American politics. Critics of environmentalism dismissed environmentalists' warnings against global warming, air and water pollution, toxic waste dumps, the destruction of forests, the wholesale extinction of animal and plant life, and the deterioration of the earth's ozone layer as alarmist, anti-business, and anti-human. This debate still rages, as the nation tries to come to terms with its obligations to its people and to the rest of the world.

5. *The human costs of an ailing economy*:

a. *Homelessness* in the 1980s and 1990s became an increasingly visible national problem, on a scale rivaling the era of the Great Depression. Traceable to, among other factors, the movement in the 1970s to deinstitutionalize many mental patients, the growing dearth of affordable housing, and the ordinary American's

increasingly precarious economic health, homelessness cannot be dismissed any longer as a "phony" national problem.

b. *Substance abuse*, for most of the nation's history ignored because it tended to affect only the inner cities (and because alcoholism and smoking were not considered part of the problem until the last twenty years), spread throughout the nation -- a reaction, in part, to the gutting of the economy in many regions. The collapse of industries in the "rust belt" of New England and the Middle West, and the apparently quick and easy money to be made in drug trafficking, have combined to make drug abuse one of the principal problems afflicting American society -- despite nearly three decades of sustained federal, state, and local efforts to combat traffic in dangerous drugs.

c. *Violent crime* -- of which drug traffic is only one instance -- continued to preoccupy Americans, and to provide a focus for political argument. Two camps emerged to debate the crime problem with growing acrimony but little progress to any sort of solution: One group, based mainly along the right wing of the political spectrum, maintained that government should "get tough" with criminals, concentrating on apprehending those who commit crime and punishing them more severely (including an expanded use of the death penalty). The other, occupying mostly the left wing, argued that crime was a phenomenon whose roots could be traced to larger social ills; they maintained that the most effective response to crime would be to combat homelessness, unemployment, and other social problems, and to control individual citizens' access to firearms, rather than "locking criminals up."

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These crises, in varying proportions and to varying degrees over time, posed the enduring issues of American life in the years since 1975. One of the principal reasons for the American people's growing disenchantment with, and distrust of, politics and politicians is the growing inability and unwillingness of all too many politicians, of whatever party or point of view, to come to grips with the problems that alarm Americans most. Ironically, one of the principal reasons for American politicians' failure to confront national problems is their astute perception that most Americans either do not want to face the details of those problems, the hard work needed to devise solutions, and the necessity of accepting social costs as the price of those solutions.[3]

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[3]The classic example is NIMBY -- "not in my backyard" -- a label for Americans' demands for such things as sewage-treatment plants, homeless shelters, and prisons, only not in their own neighborhoods.

I. DRIFT, 1975-1981

Two transitional Presidents, Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter, struggled in vain to find solutions to the crises confronting the nation at home and abroad as Americans came to question the effectiveness and desirably of a large, activist government.[4] In retrospect, their successes at least equaled their failures in office, suggesting that they were underrated at the time. In retrospect, the electorate unfairly may have saddled Ford and Carter with the blame for problems beyond any President's ability to solve -- another consequence of the centrality of the Presidency in American public life.

• Despite occasional foreign-policy successes, such as the negotiation of a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, the Panama Canal Treaty, and the Camp David Accords, most Americans believed that the nation's course in world affairs was drifting, uncertain, and potentially self-destructive.

• For the first time in the nation's history, Americans recognized the interconnectedness of the American economy with the world economy -- and they did not like what they saw. The energy crisis of the 1970s (which began during the last years of the Nixon Presidency but achieved its full stature in the Ford and Carter years) dramatized how the American "way of life," with its often extravagant consumption of energy and other scarce resources, was in truth highly dependent on foreign nations and the resources they controlled. Also, new competitors in the global economy -- most prominently, the Germans and the Japanese, soon followed by the South Koreans -- challenged American technological and economic primacy. Combining inflation of prices with economic stagnation ("stagflation"), the recession of the early 1970s worsened, combining economic downturn and persistent unemployment with inflation that eroded the purchasing power of the individual consumer. The confluence of these phenomena persuaded millions of Americans that the United States had lost its way.

• The eroding of public confidence in government that began with the assassinations of the 1960s and the Vietnam debacle accelerated due to (i) Watergate (and its coda, the Ford pardon of Nixon) and (ii) a series of congressional scandals (such as ABSCAM). At the same time, Americans grew increasingly litigious even as they damned lawyers as parasites and the courts as hopelessly inefficient and unjust. In the sphere of criminal justice, Americans demanded a greater emphasis on "victims' rights" and downplay or even brush aside "criminals' rights" -- even those protected by the Bill of Rights. Even the press -- briefly American heroes after the Watergate scandal -- became vulnerable to public criticism, for while Americans eagerly

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[4]This Essay uses Presidential terms as an organizing structure for two reasons: (2) because students can grasp Presidencies as organizing principles more easily than any other artificially imposed chronological structure; (2) because this structure recognizes the continuing central role of the Presidency in defining and shaping the nation's public life.

consumed their regular diet of startling revelations and exposure of scandal, they also complained about an overly intrusive, arrogant press.

II. THE REAGAN REVOLUTION: A NEW DIRECTION AT HOME?

Ronald Reagan was the key political figure of the 1980s. The most successful President in American politics since Dwight Eisenhower, Reagan (a Republican) took for his model Franklin D. Roosevelt (a Democrat), who had been his political hero as a young man. But, while Reagan, a former movie and television actor, skilfully emulated FDR's mastery of the modern news media and his ability to communicate directly with ordinary citizens, he had a far different substantive agenda in mind.

At home, Reagan reversed half a century of American political assumptions. For the first time since before the New Deal, a President persuaded Americans that activist government was not the way to solve the nation's problems -- rather, as he declared in his 1981 inaugural address, government was the problem. Reagan set out to slash the size of the federal government, targeting some agencies (even Cabinet departments, such as Education and Energy) for abolition and others for radical reduction. Although he failed in these sweeping goals, he managed for eight years to appoint officials to run those departments who shared his hostility to their agencies' mandates and missions, and who managed to administer many of those agencies into ineffectiveness in achieving their statutory mandates.

Reagan's great goal was to slash taxes and cut governmental regulation of the economy in order to release the productive energies of the American people. He confidently maintained that cutting taxes would enable Americans to invest in new economic enterprises, causing the economy to grow dramatically and creating thousands of jobs or even more, thus re-employing many Americans who had lost their jobs due to the recession of the 1970s. He also insisted that excessive governmental regulation absorbed the same energies that should be diverted into investment in economic growth.

"Reaganomics" never worked in practice as well as it sounded in theory -- neither its tax-cutting nor its deregulating goals came to fruition.

Taxation: Most Americans who received the benefits of the tax cuts did not invest their new income; rather, they either used it for added consumption or to finance short-term economic transactions (such as leveraged buyouts, corporate takeovers, tender offers) that promised quick and lucrative short-term investments. Many corporations were forced to issue "junk bonds" to finance takeover attempts and tender offers, or to make themselves unattractive to takeover specialists; this added debt forced these corporations not to invest in new growth but to cut their expenses to the bone, to close plants and fire workers, and to emphasize only projects guaranteed to generate short-term returns.

Regulation: The deregulating of such vital components of the American economy as the airlines and the savings and loan industry only resulted in a bitter economic struggle for survival. The airlines emerged from the 1980s sadly weakened, with several previously important carriers in bankruptcy or on the brink of insolvency and nationwide complaints mounting about safety and service. If any one industry can stand as the monument to Reaganomics, it was the savings & loan industry. The abolition of regulations limiting the power of thrifts to engage in business other than banking, of rules limiting the territory within which they could operate, and of enforcement mechanisms designed to rein the thrifts in combined to produce an orgy of failed investments, explosive paper growth followed by even more explosive economic collapses, and a huge, nightmarish burden of debt that the federal government was obliged to shoulder because of its commitment, dating from the New Deal, to provide deposit insurance to protect individual depositors from the failure of S&Ls.

The 1980s witnessed an economic boom that, on the surface, seemed to confirm the efficacy of Reaganomics. However, the go-go 1980s proved even more evanescent than the go-go 1960s, for the 1987 stock market crash revealed to all what worried economic experts had been predicting for years: An economy whose growth was based on little more than the pyramiding of paper was destined to fail; the higher the pyramid reached only meant that the economy had a lot further to drop.

The other component of the Reagan Revolution at home was the President's vigorous insistence on traditional values. Appointing federal judges and executive-branch officials who shared his conservative agenda, Reagan and his allies hoped to reverse government domestic policy on all fronts -- withdrawing the federal government from providing social services, stripping the federal government of its authority or commitment to enforcing constitutional rights, eliminating legal services for the poor, and so forth. Although the actual achievement of these goals was fragmentary, Reagan managed to reverse the general public's thinking on most major domestic issues.

Emblematic of the Reagan Revolution's emphasis on traditional values was the Administration's campaign to name to the federal bench right-wing judges who would reaffirm traditional values and roll back Supreme Court precedents (such as *Miranda v. Arizona* [1966], on the rights of criminal suspects and defendants; *Griswold v. Connecticut* [1963], recognizing a constitutional right of privacy in sexual matters even though the text of the Constitution did not provide specific authorization for it; *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* [1978], the pivotal decision on affirmative action; and, above all, *Roe v. Wade* [1973], the decision that extended constitutional privacy to protect a woman's decision whether or not to have an abortion). At first, the Reagan judicial appointments sailed through the Senate (dominated by Republicans, for the first time in more than three decades, from January 1981 through January 1987) with at best token opposition from demoralized Democrats. In 1987, the retirement of Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., gave the Reagan Administration the chance to redirect the Supreme Court decisively. But Reagan's nomination of Judge Robert H. Bork, a former Yale law professor and a leading right-wing critic of activist liberal Court decisions, provoked a firestorm

of opposition and criticism. The televised hearings on Bork's nomination, combined with a vigorous (and occasionally unfair) media campaign against Bork organized by liberal activists, doomed the nomination. In many ways, the Bork defeat spelled the end of Reagan's attempts to put traditional values at the core of the nation's public and private life.

III. THE REAGAN REVOLUTION: A NEW DIRECTION ABROAD?

Abandoning peaceful coexistence and detente, President Reagan engaged in a vigorous polemical struggle with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations. Reagan denounced the U.S.S.R. as the "evil empire" and at first reversed the course set by his Republican (Nixon, Ford) and Democratic (Carter) predecessors. Reagan and his advisors also favored focusing the nation's energies abroad on combating allies of the U.S.S.R. such as Cuba, new Communist or Marxist regimes such as the Sandinista government of Nicaragua, and rebel movements such as the FMLN in El Salvador. The domestic consequence of Reagan's foreign policy was a massive defense buildup, which seemingly helped to remedy the recession while diverting resources, money, and economic energy into defense industries.

The great difficulty that Reagan and his Administration faced was congressional skepticism of and opposition to Administration foreign policy. Determined to conduct foreign and defense policy despite this resistance from a coordinate branch of government, Reagan and his aides sidestepped legal and even constitutional limitations, arguing for an expansive interpretation of executive authority in defense and foreign policy. The unraveling in late 1986 and 1987 of the Iran-contra affair derailed the Reagan Presidency, and Reagan and his allies managed to regain their balance only through exploring new initiatives offered by the reformist leader of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev. In sum, Reagan's foreign policy was a melange of angry rhetoric, haphazard decisionmaking, and unfulfilled goals. His rapprochement with Gorbachev epitomized the condition of his foreign policy, for he embraced in 1987 the leader of the nation he so fiercely denounced five years before as "the evil empire."

IV. DRIFT, 1989-1993

George Bush captured the Presidency by persuading the American people that he would continue the Reagan Revolution and by depicting his Democratic adversary as unpatriotic, incompetent, and unfit to govern. At the same time, Bush portrayed himself as uniquely well qualified to assume the Presidency, regularly describing himself as the most experienced man ever to hold the office. The question was whether he could translate his experience and his allegiance to the Reagan Revolution into a successful Presidency. The difficulty was that President Bush inherited not only the apparent successes of the Reagan years -- the collapse of the Warsaw Pact nations (in 1989) and the Soviet Union (in 1991), ending the Cold War -- but the unresolved problems of that era as well.

It was in the Bush years that the failure of Reaganomics became apparent. Skyrocketing deficits were exacerbated by the blossoming of the S&L crisis and a shaky economy that never recovered from the stock market crash of 1987. Bush's attempts to solve the deficit problem by a one-time increase of taxes violated his single most famous campaign promise, damaged his credibility, and divided his own party.

Further, the collapse of European Communism left the man who had trained all his adult life to be a Cold War President without any clear sense of what the post-Cold War world should be. President Bush showed great skill in organizing, and in rallying public support for, military ventures in Panama (1989) and the Persian Gulf (1991); his popularity ratings soared after each of these operations, but he could not translate them into domestic-policy initiatives or successes.

The 1980s witnessed an all-but-official decision to ignore problems of race and poverty in America, or at best to commit these problems to the tender mercies of the free market. Devastating riots such as those in New York City (1991) and Los Angeles (1992) suggested that the problems had not gone away, but had festered in obscurity until they exploded on the public scene.

In sum, the Bush years were a period of drift like the Ford and Carter years. Americans therefore sought a President who promised to provide the certainty in defining issues and policies responding to them and the decisiveness in giving those policies effect that they associated with admired Presidents of the past -- Lincoln, FDR, Harry Truman, JFK, and (paradoxically) Reagan.

George Bush was not that President. His opponents in 1992, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton (the Democratic nominee) and H. Ross Perot, a self-created independent candidate, skilfully pilloried Bush as ineffective, out of touch, and unresponsive to the serious problems the nation faced. The question the electorate faced was whether either Clinton or Perot could take up the challenge that Bush could not meet. The voters chose Clinton, in large part because they disdained Bush and distrusted Perot because he could not or would not step beyond his folksy anatomizations of the problems the nation faced to provide detailed accounts of his proposed solutions. By contrast, Clinton and his running mate, Tennessee Senator Al Gore, Jr., ran the best Democratic presidential campaign in living memory. Clinton presented himself as a skilled politician with a firm grasp of the nation's problems and the ability to devise and enact solutions to those problems.

Throughout 1992, politicians and citizens alike called repeatedly for sweeping amendments to the Constitution -- to respond to the growing budget deficit by requiring a balanced budget, to curb the powers of incumbents by limiting congressional terms of office, to ban abortion, and to restore prayer to the public schools. Demands surfaced, for the first time in a generation, for a second constitutional convention. The election of Clinton stilled these demands -- but the respite might well be brief. As President Clinton took office, he seemed to

represent a last chance for normal politics; should he fail in his efforts to provide solutions to the nation's problems, the demand for sweeping constitutional change might well resurface.[5]

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[5]See Richard B. Bernstein with Jerome Agel, *Amending America: If We Love the Constitution So Much, Why Do We Keep Trying to Change It?* (New York: Times Books, 1993).